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MPs urge investigation into PPE contracts after Mone revelations

Anger in Commons at 'sickening, shameful' procurement deals

Henry Dyer
Peter Walker

The growing controversy over a PPE company linked to the Conservative peer Michelle Mone sparked an angry reaction in parliament yesterday, with MPs demanding an inquiry into wider concerns over profiteering from unusable personal protective equipment during the pandemic.

One MP condemned instances of politically connected firms benefiting from government contracts as "absolutely sickening, shameful and unforgivable", while parliamentarians asked ministers for more information about how PPE Medpro was awarded more than £200m in government contracts after it was referred to ministers by Lady Mone.

MPs also asked broader questions about the government's procurement contracts during the pandemic – some of which, one MP said, had since been flagged by Transparency International as a "corruption risk".

In response to an urgent question yesterday from Labour's deputy leader, Angela Rayner, the junior health minister Neil O'Brien repeatedly sought to defend the government's actions and its use of a "VIP lane" that prioritised referrals from politically connected PPE companies.

He said: "The people who came through the high-priority route were not politically connected people, except in the sense that they were being referred in by MPs across the house."

The urgent question was triggered by a report in yesterday's Guardian. Mone and her children secretly received £29m originating from the profits of PPE Medpro, a company that was awarded large government contracts after she recommended it to ministers, documents seen by the Guardian indicate.

Mone's referral of the company to the Conservative ministers Michael Gove and Theodore Agnew helped it secure a place in the "VIP lane", which was used by the government during the pandemic to prioritise certain firms. PPE Medpro then secured two contracts worth more £203m.

Tens of millions of pounds of PPE Medpro's profits were later transferred to a secret offshore trust of which Mone and her adult children were the beneficiaries, the documents indicate.

The documents state that the secret payment to the trust was via Mone's husband, Douglas Barrowman, who weeks 4 →



PHOTOGRAPH: WATTIE CHEUNG

Strike disruption grows in run-up to Christmas

Children at a rally for striking teachers in Glasgow yesterday. The protest came as nurses confirmed they – like postal, railway and school staff – will go on strike in the coming weeks. **News** *Page 2* →

UK inquiry into dinghy tragedy criticised

Diane Taylor

Bereaved families who lost relatives in a mass drowning in the Channel a year ago have criticised the UK body investigating the tragedy over a lack of progress in determining how and why dozens of lives were lost.

An interim report by the Marine Accident Investigation Branch, published yesterday, confirmed the boat had reached UK waters.

Initially, officials had thought the tragedy was outside their jurisdiction as the bodies and survivors had been found in the French part of the Channel. But an investigation into the British search and rescue response was launched in January "when it became evident that some of the events relating to 9 →

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News



◀ *Members of the striking University and College Union on a picket line outside Manchester University*
PHOTOGRAPH: JOEL GOODMAN/ THE GUARDIAN

Nurses to strike for two days as December disruption deepens

Gwyn Topham
Andrew Gregory
Sally Weale

Britain is facing a torrid month of industrial action and disruption before Christmas, after nurses announced they would be joining postal, education and rail workers in a wave of strikes that will peak during the busiest weeks for office parties and festive shopping.

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) said its members would stage national strikes – the first in its 106-year history – on 15 and 20 December, with action expected to last for 12 hours on both days.

The industrial action will seriously disrupt care and is likely to be the first in a series of strikes over the winter and into the spring by other NHS staff, including junior doctors and ambulance workers.

The union said ministers had not taken up the offer of formal talks since the ballot result over a fortnight ago and so "chosen strike action".

The RCN general secretary, Pat Cullen, said: "They have the power and the means to stop this by opening serious talks that address our dispute.

"Nursing staff have had enough of being taken for granted, enough of low pay and unsafe staffing levels, enough of not being able to give our patients the care they deserve."

The move came as postal workers, university staff and Scottish schoolteachers went on strike yesterday, while rail unions reaffirmed plans for eight days of national strikes despite a "productive" meeting with ministers. The dates announced are clustered around the week before the Christmas holidays begin, when demand will be high for restaurants and retail as office party season peaks and shopping activity surges.

The first nurses' strike on 15 December will come in the heart of a planned week of rail strikes by the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union, on 13-14 and 16-17 December, and on the second day of a 48-hour walkout by the Communications Workers Union (CWU) at Royal Mail, on 14-15 December.



Although unions have said there are no plans for a general strike, several have talked of coordinating action to maximise disruption and political impact. The RMT leader, Mick Lynch, has called for "a wave of action" on behalf of low-paid workers, a phrase echoed by the TUC boss, Frances O'Grady, although she said synchronisation was not always necessarily the most effective strategy.

Following a meeting with the transport secretary, Mark Harper, yesterday, Lynch said the minister had "started a dialogue", and "got rid of the bellicose nonsense" under his recent predecessor Grant Shapps.

However, Lynch ruled out calling off the eight days of strikes in December and January. He said: "If we call off the strikes, we'll never get a settlement … My members won't forgive me. I've given a commitment – until we get a tangible outcome, the action will be on."

Meanwhile, the start of the latest wave of industrial action yesterday saw picket lines outside schools, universities and mail sorting centres.

Up to 2.5 million students were expected to face disruption in what was billed as the biggest strike in the history of UK higher education.

Around 70,000 members of the University and College Union (UCU), including lecturers, librarians and researchers, started a 48-hour walkout yesterday, with another one-day strike planned for next Wednesday, over pay, pensions and contracts.

Jo Grady, general secretary of UCU, said: "If university vice-chancellors don't get serious, our message is simple: this bout of strike action will be just the beginning."

University administrators, cleaners, security and catering staff in Unison are also taking industrial action over pay at 19 universities.

In Scotland, schoolchildren stayed at home as teachers staged their first national strike in almost 40 years, after a pay offer as an "insult".

Tens of thousands of members of the CWU working for Royal Mail also walked out on Thursday, in the first of 10 days of strikes before Christmas.

Musk grants amnesty to suspended Twitter users

Dan Milmo
Global technology editor

Elon Musk has announced a general amnesty for suspended Twitter accounts, in a move that brought a warning that "super-spreaders of hate" will return to the platform.

Twitter's new owner said the amnesty would begin next week after a majority of votes in a poll on his account backed the move. Accounts suspended on Twitter include Donald Trump's former adviser Steve Bannon, the rightwing UK commentator Katie Hopkins, and David Duke, the former Ku Klux Klan grand wizard.

Musk posted a poll on Wednesday asking if a general amnesty should be offered to accounts provided they have not "broken the law or engaged in egregious spam", without specifying what laws he meant. More than 3.1m votes were recorded by the poll, with 72% in favour of an amnesty.

Announcing the result, Musk tweeted: "The people have spoken. Amnesty begins next week." He added "Vox Populi, Vox Dei", a Latin phrase meaning "the voice of the people [is] the voice of God."

Musk's announcement comes days after he reinstated Trump's account as well as the accounts for Canadian psychologist Jordan Peterson, former professional kickboxer Andrew Tate – whose extreme misogynistic views led to a Twitter ban in 2017 – and the unlocking of the account for US rapper Ye, formerly Kanye West, who was sanctioned last month for posting antisemitic comments.

The Center for Countering Digital Hate, a campaign group, urged advertisers, many of whom have already paused spending on the platform, to stop funding Twitter.

"Super-spreaders of hate, abuse and harassment will be the only people to benefit from this latest decision by Twitter," said Imran Ahmed, chief executive of CCDH. "The choice for advertisers has never been starker: stick around and back Elon Musk, or protect their brands and ensure their marketing dollars aren't used to enable the spread of hate, abuse and disinformation."

> *'Super-spreaders of hate, abuse and harassment will be the only people to benefit from this'*
>
> **Imran Ahmed**
> *Online campaigner*

This week Musk ruled out the return of conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, who has promoted the false claim that the Sandy Hook school massacre was a hoax, saying he had "no mercy" for people who capitalise on the deaths of children for personal fame. Other banned Twitter accounts include the rightwing writer Milo Yiannopoulos, and former BBC presenter David Icke.

Musk had previously said there would be no account reinstatements until a newly announced Content Moderation Council had met. However, the Tesla CEO then said human rights groups "broke the deal" by urging advertisers to halt spending on the platform.





◄ *The Bayeux tapestry depicts La Mora with a striped sail* PHOTOGRAPH: GLASSHOUSE/ALAMY

▲ *William the Conqueror set sail for England with his most trusted knights and 60 oarsmen*

'A symbol of friendship': French to build replica of William the Conqueror's ship

Kim Willsher
Paris

On the 27 September 1066, William, Duke of Normandy, set sail in La Mora, the flagship of a massive fleet that would conquer England. Now a historical association on France's Normandy coast is to recreate the ship that launched almost 1,000 years of cross-Channel enmity.

The Bayeux tapestry, the 70-metre-long (230ft) embroidered account of the Norman Conquest, depicts La Mora as a Viking-style longship with a striped red and gold sail flying the papal banner on its mast.

Aboard was William, his most trusted knights, their entourage and horses, and almost 60 oarsmen.

The rest, as they say, is history. The English King Harold was defeated in the Battle of Hastings 17 days later, and the Norman duke became William the Conqueror, King of England.

The €13m (£11.1m) project will see the 34-metre-long La Mora recreated in a former industrial warehouse near the quayside of the port of Honfleur.

Olivier Pagezy, president of the La Mora association, admits the builders do not have much to go on. There are no original plans and few details of the actual ship except those depicted on the tapestry, where it was shown with the gilded statue of a child on its stern and the head of a lion with its tongue sticking out at its prow.

"We [also] have a plan of La Mora's sister ship as well as similar ships that are represented in museums in Denmark and Norway where these kind of craft were originally built," Pagezy told the Guardian. "Our architect is confident we can reproduce the ship as authentically as possible."

The project's scientific committee is in close contact with the Roskilde Museum in Denmark, which has reproduced a number of 11th-century ships using historic techniques.

Marc Ronet, a naval architect who is overseeing the project and drew up the initial plans for La Mora II, says it was a Viking-type warship, powered by oar and a 150 sq metre sail, that was narrow and shallow, meaning it was fast. So fast, the history books tell us that after setting sail from the village of Barfleur on the evening of 27 September 1066, William had to wait in the middle of the Channel and have breakfast with wine the next morning while the rest of his invasion fleet, carrying more than 7,000 men and 2,000 horses, caught up.



A 3D visual of La Mora, a Viking-type warship

The fleet landed at Pevensey later that day and went on to defeat Harold II in Hastings on 14 October.

"Contrary to how it's done today, in the construction of an *esneque* [Norse war ship] the planks of the outer shell that are fitted first, before the frame or skeleton. This method requires a very particular know-how and fewer tools," Ronet said.

"The way they cut the wood, planed the boards and assembled the pieces is linked to the tools of the 11th century. The carpenters of the time used green wood, which was easier to bend. After felling the oaks, they split them with wedges and sledgehammers and then cut the boards to make the planks. The point of splitting the wood is to let it run its own course: in the end, the planks are stronger and thinner, and the boats are lighter.

"Marine carpenters will have to relearn these gestures and techniques that are no longer used today."

Another challenge is to have the replica boat certified seaworthy.

"European standards obviously do not take into account 11th-century ships. However, La Mora's 34-metre length makes it a large pleasure boat. We are working with Maritime Affairs to find technical solutions to meet current safety standards," he added.

The first €7m phase of the project will see the site converted as a tourist and exhibition centre to be opened at the end of next year, when the €5m second phase to build the replica will begin. Paying visitors will see the work live as it progresses.

Although Honfleur has no historical connection to the Norman Conquest, Pagezy says the site was the most suitable and the exhibition space will reflect the region's wider maritime history and attract 200,000 tourists a year.

Pagezy says it is hoped the new La Mora will be ready to sail the Channel in 2027. This time, he insists, the French come in peace.

He also hopes the project will also spark interest and sponsorship in the UK. "There are descendants of William's company both sides of the Channel and the object is to create something that is Franco-British. The object is not to play up the French invasion or be in any way triumphant. We want this to be a symbol of Franco-British friendship, something that in the wake of Brexit can reunite our two countries."

'Second spring' for plant life as mild temperatures continue

Damien Gayle

Among the yellow and brown clumps of fallen leaves and the skeletal frames of deciduous trees this autumn, are some surprising finds: green shoots and bright flowers.

Recent mild temperatures and wet conditions have encouraged some plants that should be dormant over the winter to burst back into life, experts have said, with possible disruptive effects on nature's cycles.

The apparent second spring has come after the UK recorded an unprecedented 10 months of above-average temperatures.

"Recent mild conditions and plentiful rain will have encouraged unseasonal plant growth," John David, the head of horticultural taxonomy at the RHS, said.

"This summer caused quite a few plants, shrubs and trees to lose leaves or die down to survive the heat and drought. It was noticeable that when the rain returned in September, quite a few plants produced new leaves that would not normally do so at this time of year, and some also came into flower again."

David said the autumn had so far been "exceptionally mild", and that RHS Garden Wisley, in Woking, Surrey, still had not had an air frost.

"The mild weather seems set to continue, as we are experiencing a series of deep low pressure systems coming across the Atlantic bringing warm, humid air," he said.

The north of England has also had unseasonal weather, with one gardener at a National Trust property reporting fuchsia and dahlias blooming into October. Since then, a frost had "knocked things back", he said.

"Certainly we noticed extremely mild weather around October, and that kept prolonging things," he added. "It can be problematic if you don't have a proper dormant period, at some point, over the winter."



▲ *Powis Castle's strawberry tree has produced a bumper amount of fruit*

Powis Castle and Garden, near Welshpool in Powys, said its strawberry tree had produced double the amount of fruit this year, the first time the gardening team had seen such an increase. While Ned Lomax, head gardener of Bodnant Garden in Conwy, said: "Some plants are actively growing or flowering now as a response to the mild and wet weather following the long, dry summer when growth wasn't possible."

With temperatures expected to drop closer to the usual average, so the second spring may not last. But its effects may be far-reaching.

Gove pressed over contracts for firm with links to Mone

David Conn

Michael Gove is facing mounting pressure to fully explain his role in the government's awarding of large PPE contracts to a company that was first recommended to him by the Tory peer Michelle Mone.

Asked in an interview yesterday how he had responded to Lady Mone's approach in May 2020, Gove said he had referred all offers of PPE to "the appropriate civil service channels".

That explanation appears at odds with a chain of emails previously released under the Freedom of Information Act that shed light on how the company, PPE Medpro, was added to a "VIP" lane that prioritised politically connected firms. The emails suggest that after initially being contacted by Mone, Gove suggested she contact another then minister, the Tory peer Theodore Agnew.

She then did so, emailing both Gove and Lord Agnew using their private, non-governmental email addresses to tell them about PPE that could be procured from "my team in Hong Kong". It was Agnew, who was then a minister in the Cabinet Office responsible for procurement, who referred PPE Medpro to the VIP lane.

Pressed by the presenter Kay Burley on Sky News to recall how he had responded to Mone's offer, Gove, who was Cabinet Office minister at the time, said his job then was to make sure anyone who offered PPE was "referred to the right channel".

He added: "I would have hoped that you or I, if someone said 'I can provide PPE', that we would have said: 'Great. The thing to do is to go to this official government process, to go through this procurement gateway, to have the quality of the contract that you're seeking to secure assessed.'"

However, the emails obtained by the Guardian appear to show Gove directing Mone not directly to civil servants, but to a fellow minister.

They reveal how Mone had laid out a sales pitch to Agnew for the supply of PPE. The government had by then suspended normal competitive tendering processes and, it would later emerge, was fast-tracking some offers of PPE referred by politically connected people to a "VIP" lane.

"I hope this email finds you well," Mone wrote to Agnew, copying in Gove, using their private emails. "Michael Gove has asked to urgently contact you [sic]. We have managed to source PPE masks though [sic] my team in Hong Kong. They have managed to secure 100,000pcs per day of KN95 [face masks] which is equivalent to N95 or FFP2. In order to commit to this 100,000pcs per day could you please get back to me asap as freight will also need to be secured. Hope to see you in the House of Lords when we get out of lockdown. Kindest regards, Michelle."

Agnew replied from his personal email address, copying in the government email address of his private secretary. "Michelle, thank you for your kind offer. I am forwarding this into the appropriate PPE workstream with Dept of Health. They will ask you some basic questions on the details of the offer and then hopefully progress it from there. Best wishes Theodore."

One of his staff then emailed a Covid PPE "priority appraisals" mailbox, asking them to "pick up with



▲ *Michael Gove's explanation of his role appears at odds with emails*

Baroness Mone". The staff member added the words "VIA LORD AGNEW" and "VIP" to the subject field. At that stage, the company, PPE Medpro, had not even been incorporated. However within weeks it had been awarded two government contracts worth £203m to supply millions of masks and sterile surgical gowns.

Mone's lawyers have previously said she never had any role "in the process by which contracts were awarded to PPE Medpro". PPE Medpro previously said the company "was not awarded the contract because of company or personal connections to the UK government or the Conservative party".

The Guardian was only able to establish private emails had been used because of an apparent administrative error by the Cabinet Office, which failed to properly redact documents released after a Guardian freedom of information request.

The Guardian contacted Gove to ask him how the account he had given of his response to Mone's offer on Sky News, in which he said he referred all offers to "the appropriate civil service channels", was consistent with the suggestion he had in fact told Mone to contact Agnew. He did not respond.

The government has consistently defended the "VIP" process; spokespeople have maintained that contracts were awarded "in line with procurement regulations and transparency guidelines, and there are robust rules and processes in place to prevent conflicts of interest". However, the use of the high-priority lane to award contracts has been ruled unlawful by the high court.



¹Saving based on total cost of ownership. Was £29 a month for 24 months. ²Estimated battery life based on testing using a median Pixel user battery usage profile across a mix of talk, data, standby and use of limited other features that are default in Extreme Battery Saver mode (which disables various features including 5G connectivity). Battery testing conducted on a major operator network. Battery testing conducted in California in mid-2022 on pre-production hardware and software using default settings, except that Extreme Battery Saver mode was enabled. Battery life depends upon many factors and usage of certain features will decrease battery life. Actual battery life may be lower. ³Standard network terms and conditions apply. Pay monthly price subject to credit check eligibility and minimum term on selected tariff. Monthly price may increase in line with CPI+3.9%. Currys Group Limited, 1 Portal Way, Acton, London, W3 6RS. Registered in England. No 504877.



MPs demand inquiry into VIP lane for Covid PPE procurement

Continued *from page 1*

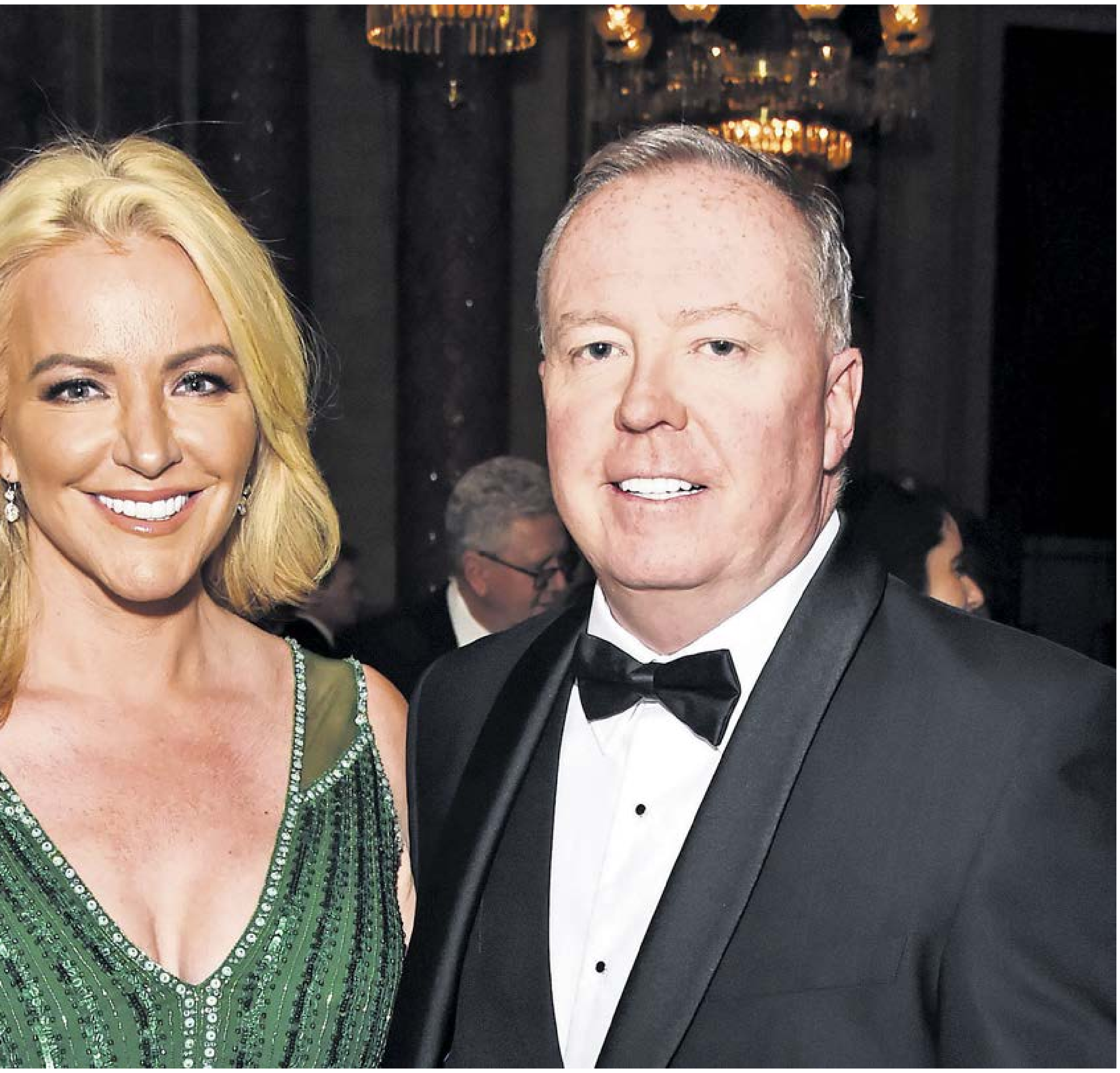
earlier had received at least £65m in profits from PPE Medpro.

Mone's lawyer last year said she "did not benefit financially and was not connected to PPE Medpro in any capacity". Yesterday Mone broke a 10-month-long silence on Twitter by sharing an image that said: "Don't believe everything you read, or everything you think."

The SNP's Cabinet Office spokesperson, Brendan O'Hara, said it had been "almost inevitable" that the VIP lane "would come to this".

"This get-rich-quick scheme to fast-track cronies, politically connected pals and colleagues was never going to end well. I suspect that today's revelations, however shocking, are simply the tip of a very large iceberg – an iceberg that could yet sink this ship of fools," he said.

He added: "Transparency International UK has flagged 20% of the £15bn given out by the Tories in PPE contracts at the height of the pandemic as a corruption risk. As we have already heard, they are spending



£770,000 every day to store much of that useless equipment in China.

"Now that we have one Tory politician who had absolutely no background in PPE procurement personally making millions from those contracts, does the government plan to proactively investigate how many others like that are in their ranks, or are they content to sit there and watch this dripping roast of sleaze, corruption and scandal unfold?"

O'Brien replied: "The idea that there was some sort of greater success if you had a political connection, when you say 'politically connected', they were our constituents - they were getting in touch with all of us, they had to be referred on somewhere, they had to be managed and they went through the same process as every other contract."

The government is continuing its attempt to recover money from PPE Medpro in relation to unused gowns bought in a £122m contract - one of two the company was awarded. The gowns were rejected after a technical inspection and never used.

PPE Medpro insists that the gowns bought through the £122m contract passed inspection and that the company - and, presumably, the beneficiaries of its profits - are entitled to keep the money.

O'Brien told parliament that a "process" was under way with regard to what he called an "underperforming contract". "The first step is to send a letter before action, which outlines a claim for damages. That is followed by litigation in the event that a satisfactory agreement has not been reached."

Rayner called on the government to publish correspondence on the award of PPE Medpro's contracts once the mediation process had finished, a call that O'Brien did not respond to.

The SNP MP Alan Brown called for "a public inquiry into PPE procurement", while Labour's Sam Tarry called for the government to publish in full the names of ministers, MPs and officials who had referred companies to the VIP lane. "We need to know what corruption happened," Tarry said.

The Commons speaker, Lindsay Hoyle, reminded members that parliamentary procedure meant MPs were not allowed to specifically criticise the conduct of Mone, a sitting member of the House of Lords.

However, several MPs expressed strongly worded criticism of the facts revealed in the Guardian.

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi, who lost three family members in the pandemic, said: "For Tory peers and other chums of the Conservative party to have been profiteering at taxpayers' expense from shoddy, unusable PPE, especially through the VIP procurement lane, at a time when people were locked down in their homes and tens of thousands of people, including my loved ones, were dying is absolutely sickening, shameful and unforgivable."

Dhesi called on O'Brien to offer an apology to bereaved families for "the amazing lack of integrity at the heart of this whole process". The minister did not do so.

Criticism of the PPE contracts came from both sides of the house, with the Conservative MP Christopher Chope asking O'Brien: "What has happened to the £122m which was spent on 25m gowns supplied by the company referred to earlier, but whose gowns were never used and weren't fit for purpose?"

But another Conservative MP, Peter Bone, said there was a "rewriting of history" taking place, alleging that the opposition was making political points "out of what was actually a great success in getting our NHS staff protected".

Contacted about the Guardian's new disclosures, a lawyer for Mone said: "There are a number of reasons why our client cannot comment on these issues and she is under no duty to do so."

A lawyer who represents Barrowman and PPE Medpro said that a continuing investigation limited what his clients were able to say on these matters.

He added: "For the time being we are also instructed to say that there is much inaccuracy in the portrayal of the alleged 'facts' and a number of them are completely wrong."

£203m

Value of the contracts awarded to PPE Medpro after it was referred to ministers by Michelle Mone

£29m

Amount Mone and her children secretly received from PPE Medpro profits, documents indicate

◀ *Lady Mone and her husband, Douglas Barrowman, at a function in 2019*

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVE BENETT/GETTY

Sketch
John Crace



Beige junior minister blends back into the paintwork after he takes one for the team

Spare a thought for Neil O'Brien. A minister so beige, so junior, that not even his colleagues know he is working with them. At home, he automatically merges into the muted pastel paintwork. So it's a wonder he even became a minister, given that few had ever seen him, let alone heard of him. But when the Tory government ricochets as often as it does, then almost everyone eventually gets a go.

O'Brien first came to anyone's notice when he resigned as a bag carrier at the Department of Levelling Up in the dying days of the Boris Johnson regime. Which came as news to The Convict, who couldn't remember appointing him. But lightning struck twice and O'Brien was invited back by Rishi Sunak to serve at the most junior possible role in his government.

Yesterday morning, O'Brien had just been going about his usual daily routine. His weightiest decision whether to have one or two Weetabix for breakfast. Then came the call. Would he report to the Commons to answer an urgent question on the Michelle Mone PPE scandal that had broken in the Guardian?

No one at cabinet level could possibly do it as they had all been up late at the Spectator Parliamentarian of the Year awards the previous evening. O'Brien's schoolboy error had been to answer his phone. He had tried telling Downing Street he didn't have a clue about Mone or PPE Medpro, but that had cut no ice. "Take one for the team," he had been told before the caller rang off.

O'Brien's error had been to answer his phone. He tried saying he didn't have a clue about Mone or Medpro but that cut no ice

In the Commons, Angela Rayner began by welcoming O'Brien to the dispatch box. Then she cut to the chase. What due diligence had been done? How come Medpro had been granted a contract via the VIP fast lane? How come tens of millions of public money ended up in private offshore accounts? Why wouldn't the government publish its correspondence regarding attempts to reclaim the money? And why was the government wasting £700,000 a day on storing unusable PPE?

O'Brien did his best not to look clueless. But failed. It was like this. You had to remember the panic that engulfed the world at the start of the pandemic. So mistakes had been made. But due diligence had been done. About 19,000 companies had submitted bids and only 2,500 had passed the sniff test. He didn't say why the Medpro bid was accepted.

But he did want everyone to know there was nothing sinister about a VIP lane. It was just a way of making sure that people with access to Tory MPs were given priority treatment. There were no special favours. And getting money back was proving quite tricky. There was no VIP service for the government to reclaim money that had been obtained for worthless contracts. The VIP channel was strictly one way.

It wasn't an exactly convincing performance. Not helped by the fact there were only three Tory MPs in the chamber to back O'Brien up.

After that it was a Labour and SNP pile-on. What was Matt Hancock doing? Apart from going through a midlife crisis Down Under. Why did there even need to be a VIP lane for Tory mates? When would the government get the money back? Did they remember nurses wearing bin bags? Would there be an inquiry? Come the end, O'Brien looked on the verge of tears. Desperate to get back to obscurity.

Author accuses UK politicians of encouraging 'mean-spiritedness'

Nadia Khomami
Arts and culture correspondent

Julian Barnes has said Britain is a "bifurcated place nowadays" and accused politicians of encouraging "mean-spiritedness".

Barnes, who won the Booker prize in 2011 with The Sense of an Ending, has been a patron of Freedom from Torture – a charity that provides therapeutic care to survivors of torture who seek protection in the UK – for 25 years.

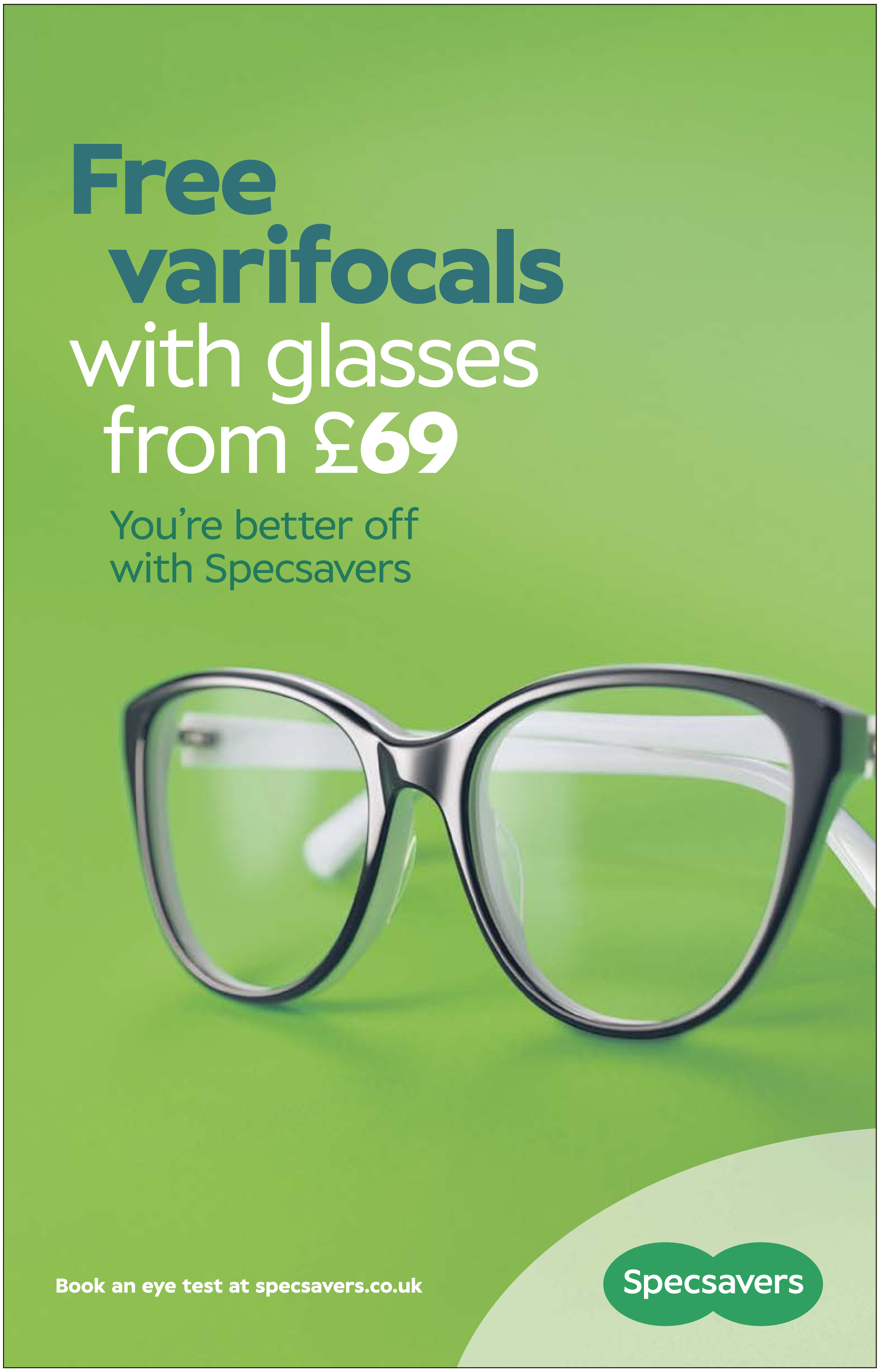
Speaking before a literary event hosted by the charity yesterday, he said: "Britain is such a bifurcated place nowadays, and politicians often encourage mean-spiritedness. But many of the electorate take a broader and more generous approach towards what being a citizen of a free country should entail.

"Those who have been tortured often literally lose their voices," Barnes said. "But writing helps unlock what they can tell us, and we look to groups like Write to Life to communicate their stories.

"As a charitable issue, torture is not an easy sell and we are all revolted by torture."



Members of the Order of Merit. Back row, left to right, Dr Venki Ramakrishnan, Prof Margaret MacMillan, Prof Dame Elizabeth Anionwu, Prof Dame Ann Dowling, Prof Sir Magdi Yacoub, Lord Darzi of Denham, Sir David Adjaye, Baroness Benjamin, Sir Paul Nurse and Lord Janvrin. Front row, left to right, David Hockney, Jean Chrétien, Sir Tim Berners-Lee, Sir David Attenborough, Sir Tom Stoppard, Baron Foster of Thames Bank, King Charles, Prof Sir Roger Penrose, Lord Rothschild, Lord Eames, Lord Rees of Ludlow, Neil MacGregor and John Howard



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Food prices should be double what they are now, says Clarkson

Emine Sinmaz

Jeremy Clarkson has said people in the UK "do not pay enough for their food" and that prices should be double what they are.

The 62-year-old presenter, who bought an Oxfordshire farm in 2008, made the comments as he spoke about the difficulties in producing food.

The broadcaster's efforts in running his farm have been documented for an Amazon Prime series, Clarkson's Farm, which has won plaudits for its cinematography. It documents the farm's staff telling Clarkson when he is being useless and charts the difficulties faced by workers during the Covid pandemic.

The success of the series has encouraged visitors to flock to Clarkson's Diddly Squat farm shop to buy products such as Cow Juice, rapeseed oil, chutneys and jams.

In an interview with the News Agents podcast, Clarkson told the presenters Emily Maitlis and Jon Sopel about his attempts to get pigs to mate.

"It's soul destroying, the amount of work," he said. "I was out last week in sideways rain, really heavy, hard rain, trying to get a pig's penis into the back of another pig, while Lisa, my girlfriend, was trying to give another sow the impression she was being mated by rubbing her back.

"And then someone's going to go: 'How much for your bacon? Why you charging so much?' Because it costs a fortune to do it."

He told the presenters that working on a farm and looking after pigs was "really hard work".

He said: "Lisa and I had to build all [the pigs'] pens, so you're out at night, because it gets dark so early, hammering fence posts and then stretching the barbed wire along and fixing the electric fences so that somebody can stand in Tesco and go: 'Have you seen the price of these pork chops?' Yes, and they should be more, they should be double what they are."

Maitlis, who joined the BBC in 2001 and presented Newsnight from 2006 until earlier this year, said: "So Jeremy Clarkson says prices should go up?"

Clarkson replied: "Yeah, they should. They should be double what they are, you know to get out and do that sort of work."



The broadcaster Jeremy Clarkson bought an Oxfordshire farm in 2008


PHOTOGRAPH: AARON CHOWN/PA

Hockney's artistic footwear catches the eye of the king

PA Media

King Charles has praised David Hockney's "galoshes" and revealed he cannot wait for the artist's next project as he celebrated leading figures from the world of politics, science and the arts.

The king gathered members of the Order of Merit for their annual Buckingham Palace lunch and welcomed an array of pioneers, from the broadcaster Sir David Attenborough to the inventor of the world wide web, Sir Tim Berners-Lee.

After a service at the Chapel Royal where six new members of the order were appointed, the king hosted a pre-lunch drinks reception and complimented Hockney on his yellow Crocs, worn with a flamboyant suit.

The artist, who used a wheelchair, insisted on standing when he met the king. Charles looked down at his feet and said, with a smile: "Those yellow galoshes … beautifully chosen."

▼ *King Charles greets David Hockney, who sported bright yellow Crocs at a Buckingham Palace lunch to honour members of the Order of Merit*
PHOTOGRAPH: REUTERS



Bradford-born Hockney, 85, is set to launch an immersive audio and visual experience of his art. The show, called Bigger & Closer (not smaller & further away), will launch on 25 January at Lightroom, a new four-storey venue in King's Cross, London.

New members of the order include the geneticist and cell biologist Sir Paul Nurse - who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine and who is chief executive of the Francis Crick Institute - and the television presenter and author Baroness (Floella) Benjamin. They were chosen by Queen Elizabeth in September.

Benjamin said: "I just feel absolutely thrilled to know that one of Her Majesty's final wishes was to have such a diverse list, and to be the first black woman from the Caribbean to be included in the order."

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In Film&Music
'We beat Radiohead 25-4 at football'
The reader interview with Ride's Andy Bell
Page 3 →





National
Immigration

Net migration to UK hits record 504,000 with Ukraine and Hong Kong arrivals

Rajeev Syal
Jessica Elgot

Net migration to the UK has reached a record level of 504,000 after the arrival of Ukrainians and Hongkongers under government schemes and an increase in the number of international students.

Asylum applications are at their highest for 32 years, but nearly 100,000 people are waiting more than six months to have their initial claims processed, government data shows.

No 10 indicated yesterday it was examining options to bring down the numbers of international students. "We are considering all options to make sure the immigration system is delivering and that does include the issue of students' dependents, and low-quality degrees," Rishi Sunak's spokesperson said.

The new net migration figure released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) is an increase of 331,000 in a single year and is at least 400,000 more than the home secretary, Suella Braverman, is aiming for.

She promised in September she would try to get overall immigration down to "tens of thousands" - a promise previously made by David Cameron and Theresa May but never achieved.

Responding to the figures, Braverman said she remained committed to reducing immigration - but did not repeat her aim of reducing the figure to tens of thousands.

"The public rightly expects us to control our borders and we remain committed to reducing migration over time in line with our manifesto commitment," she said. "This level of migration has put pressure on accommodation and housing supply, health, education and other public services. We must ensure we have a sustainable, balanced and controlled approach, which is why we continue to keep our immigration policies under review.

"My priority remains tackling the rise in dangerous and illegal crossings and stopping the abuse of our system. It is vital we restore public confidence and take back control of our borders."

Downing Street said Sunak wanted to bring overall immigration levels down.

About 504,000 more people are estimated to have moved to the UK than left in the 12 months to June 2022, up sharply from 173,000 in the year to June 2021. The total is significantly higher than the 224,000 projected for next year by the Office for Budget Responsibility.

The increase stems from a rise in visas for foreign nationals to live, study and work in the UK, which exceeded 1 million for the first time in the year to June.

A total of 1.1 million people are likely to have migrated to the UK in the year to June, the majority - 704,000 - from outside the EU. By contrast, 560,000 people are estimated to have left the UK in the same period, almost half of them - 275,000 - going back to the EU.

Students accounted for the biggest proportion of immigrants, at 277,000, nearly double the 143,000 who came to the UK in the year to June 2021. One factor was overseas students returning to their courses in the UK after studying remotely, the ONS said.

Humanitarian and other family visas accounted for the second largest proportion of immigrants, at 39% or 276,000 in the year ending June 2022. These included 89,000 Ukrainians, 76,000 from Hong Kong and 21,000 Afghans or UK returnees from Afghanistan.

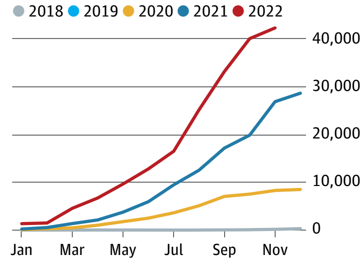
The ONS said the UK was living through a unique period when travel was recovering after Covid-19. The statistics also show that the number of people applying for asylum was the highest for nearly 20 years, at 72,027.

The backlog on asylum decisions is now 143,377, with nearly 98,000 people waiting for more than six months, according to Home Office data. Forty-one per cent of applications for asylum came from people who had travelled to the UK in small boats, the statistics show.

Enver Solomon, the head of the Refugee Council, said: "The number of men, women and children now living in limbo has risen by 20,000 in just three months, meaning 143,000 are now waiting for an initial decision on their case, with just under 98,000 waiting more than six months."

Yvette Cooper, the shadow home secretary, said: "Despite their promises to stop dangerous Channel crossings, they have failed to tackle the criminal gangs, and asylum decision-making has collapsed - with only 2% of people who arrived in small boats over the last year having had their cases decided," she said.

More than 42,000 migrants have crossed the Channel so far in 2022
People detected arriving or heading for UK



Source: Home Office, Ministry of Defence. Data to 20 Nov



Bereaved families of those who died crossing the Channel one year ago held a vigil in Parliament Square, London, yesterday
PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH/THE GUARDIAN

'Heartbroken' Relatives of 31 people who died in Channel call for justice

Nicola Kelly

Bereaved relatives of those who died in the Channel a year ago filled the western corner of Parliament Square last night, holding photos and candles in the driving rain to remember their loved ones. After a minute's silence, speeches were read out in solemn tones.

Akil was at the vigil to remember his uncle Hassan. "Whenever I think about him, I see his face. This year, it has been very difficult. We spoke to him two days before – when I heard what happened to him, I couldn't believe it. It is still difficult to believe it, almost it is impossible."

Another of those attending said: "I arrived two weeks before and my friend Twana, he messaged me to say he is coming by boat. I said 'I am so happy you come.' Then I heard what happened. This has been so difficult, that I am here but my friend is not."

Others called on the British and French authorities to help them find the bodies of their loved ones. "We – all the families – are devastated, heartbroken," said Ri, whose uncle died in the tragedy last year. "Their bodies are still lost at sea – we need to find them. The government says every refugee is welcome but no one has helped them. I really hope it doesn't happen again."

Call records released to lawyers by the French authorities as part of an investigation into the tragedy found that the first distress call to the French coastguard was logged shortly before 2.14am. The boat overturned at about 3.15am.

Shortly afterwards, at 3.30am, a passenger reported that some of the group were in the water. For 12 hours, the French and British coastguards failed to send a rescue vessel or aircraft. By the time the emergency services arrived at the scene, at 2pm the following day, all but two of the passengers had drowned or died of exposure.

Over the course of the night, the UK coastguard, which is responsible for logging emergency calls and coordinating search and rescue missions in the Channel, continued to deny that the dinghy was in British waters, repeatedly telling the passengers to call the French coastguard. The records show that the boat entered British waters at 2.30am.

None of the victims' families have been contacted by the authorities to date.

Artin, who lost his brother, said: "I did not hear anything from the British and French authorities – I even went to the police station two or three times. I want to ask them to investigate the matter more thoroughly and find out who was negligent."

Campaigners at the vigil called for more safe routes for those crossing the Channel and for the authorities to provide answers to the victims' families.

Clare Moseley, the founder of Care4Calais, which organised the vigil, said: "I have been speaking to the families of the victims for a year now. They are still waiting for answers on why their loved ones' lives were not saved by the UK or French authorities. They haven't had the courtesy of a meeting or basic information of what happened. That level of callousness and apathy from the authorities is scandalous … For the victims and their families, we will demand justice. They have suffered enough already – they need answers now."

Wilf Sullivan, Race Equality Officer at the TUC, added: "A year ago, mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers died in the English Channel despite pleas for help to the UK and French authorities. Despite this tragedy the government has doubled down on closing legal routes into our country for those fleeing war and oppression. The TUC are calling on the government to stop playing politics with people's rights and provide safe routes for those seeking asylum and safety."

Some names have been changed

Continued *from page 1*

Bereaved condemn UK inquiry into dinghy tragedy

this loss of life had occurred inside UK waters", the MAIB report states.

It adds that when officials did send out rescue services, there was no sign of the boat or its passengers.

On 24 November last year, 31 people on board an overcrowded dinghy slowly froze to death in the Channel. They had repeatedly made SOS calls to French and UK emergency services but no help was sent to them. Eventually, 27 bodies were recovered. Four are still missing. Only two people survived the incident – the worst marine disaster in the Channel for 30 years.

Among the dead were 21 men, seven women, including one who was pregnant, and three adolescents.

Their flimsy boat left France at about 10pm on 23 November. At around midnight it began to deflate and sink in the middle of the Channel. When repeated emergency calls were made by the passenger, the French told them they were in British waters while the British told them they were in French waters. It was not until 11 hours later – at 2pm the next day – that a French fishing crew spotted bodies in the water and raised the alarm.

Speaking through their lawyer on the first anniversary of the tragedy, the families expressed dismay about the interim two-page report from the MAIB. Maria Thomas, of Duncan Lewis solicitors, said: "We need to have one independent investigation into what happened that night. The English and French sides should have access to each other's records from the night of the drownings. If there are systemic issues that contributed to large loss of life that night, these need to be identified in an independent inquiry to ensure that a tragedy like this does not happen again."

Sixteen of the relatives have also written to Rishi Sunak. Their letter has been co-signed by Care4Calais, Channel Rescue, and Safe Passage, along with several trade union bodies including the TUC and the RMT, MPs including Labour's Bell Ribeiro-Addy, and the writer Michael Rosen.

It states: "We demand answers to why French and British authorities failed desperate people who came asking for help. We demand an end to the poisonous rhetoric used by our politicians – calling innocent refugees 'illegal migrants' or, worse, 'an invasion' – which breeds fear and division. We call for safe passage to allow these refugees to claim asylum in Britain without risking their lives in the Channel."

The families are further distressed because on Wednesday they received generic letters via text or WhatsApp from the MAIB that referred to neither them nor their lost loved ones by name, asking them to provide evidence such as final phone conversations they may have had with relatives when the dinghy started to deflate. Relatives say they do not understand why it has taken the MAIB a year to contact them.

Thomas said: "Promptness is critical because it ensures preservation of evidence, and it is concerning that it has taken this long to contact the families.



An RNLI rescue last month, almost a year on from the 31 Channel deaths

"Families were sent depersonalised letters without their names or the name of the relative they lost, on the day before the anniversary, making them feel the investigators don't care about them."

A spokesperson for the MAIB said: "On the anniversary of the accident our thoughts are with those who lost loved ones in this tragedy. While it may not be possible to fully understand precisely what happened at the time of the accident, it is important that we examine whether the UK's emergency response was appropriate that night once it became apparent that migrant boats might be in distress in UK waters.

"The purpose of our investigation is to improve safety, and if lessons can be learned, and if deemed appropriate, we will make recommendations to address the issues identified."

The MAIB hopes to publish the report early next summer. Its spokesperson added that tracing the victims' families had been "a complex process".

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TV presenter Nadia Sawalha learns she has had ADHD since childhood



▶ *Nadia Sawalha said she had feared she had dementia. Her ADHD diagnosis now made sense of 'the chaos I've experienced'*
PHOTOGRAPH: JUSTIN NG/RETNA/AVALON

Alexandra Topping

The TV personality Nadia Sawalha has revealed that she has been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in her late 50s.

Speaking on ITV's Loose Women yesterday, Sawalha, 58, revealed that she had been living with the condition since childhood, but was only diagnosed after making a film about ADHD for the daytime show.

A video segment in the programme showed Sawalha going through an ADHD assessment and diagnosis with a specialist, as well as speaking to others living with the condition, which include her husband, Mark Adderley.

She said she had feared she had early onset dementia, and talked through her symptoms, which can include inattentiveness, hyperactivity and impulsiveness.

She revealed that she had stopped driving because she couldn't concentrate on the road and struggled to sit quietly without background noise to help her relax.

"I couldn't accept there was a reason for all this chaos I've experienced throughout my life," she said.

Sawalha urged viewers to explore any similar symptoms. "If any of this resonates with you just investigate it a bit further. I have started medication and things are really changing for me," she said. "The point is you are very high risk of addictive behaviour."

The former EastEnders actor is the latest in a series of high-profile women to reveal that they have been diagnosed with neurodiverse conditions as adults, including the presenter Melanie Sykes and the model Christine McGuinness.

Dr Ulrich Müller-Sedgwick, a member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, which will be releasing its update resource on adult ADHD early next year, said the disorder was under-diagnosed and under-treated in Britain - particularly in girls. At least four times as many boys as girls receive a diagnosis of ADHD.

"ADHD in girls may present in less disruptive ways, such as daydreaming, but because it is not disturbing a classroom, for example, it is not seen as a problem," he said.

By adulthood, women are diagnosed with ADHD at the same rate as men, he said, adding that in recent years there was a trend of more women between the ages of 45 and 55 being diagnosed, after seeking help for the menopause.

"People speaking out about their diagnoses is a positive, because it can help our work but also draw awareness to conditions, and underfunded mental health services," he said.

Last year, Sykes said she had been diagnosed with autism at 51, saying that the experience had been "life-changing". The TV presenter spoke of her relief that things in her life had finally started to "make sense".

"I wish I'd known sooner so I could have understood why things were rolling the way they were," she said.

In the same month, McGuinness revealed she had been diagnosed as autistic, and discussed how it had affected her life and relationships.

The model and activist told the Daily Star Sunday: "Getting a diagnosis opened up my life. It's given me so much more opportunity to understand why I was the way I was."

According to the NHS Choices website, people with ADHD can be restless, may have trouble concentrating and may act on impulse. Most cases are diagnosed in children under 12, but sometimes diagnosis happens in adulthood. While the symptoms of ADHD usually improve with age, many adults who were diagnosed with the condition at a young age continue to experience problems.

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NHS faces a 'perfect winter storm' of flu cases and ambulance delays

Andrew Gregory
Health editor

The NHS in England is facing a "perfect winter storm" with 10 times more people in hospital with flu than this time last year and ambulances experiencing deadly delays.

There were an average of 344 patients a day in hospitals in England with flu last week, more than 10 times the number at the beginning of last December.

And as many as three in 10 patients arriving at hospitals by ambulance are waiting at least 30 minutes to be handed over to A&E teams, while 13% – equivalent to 10,020 patients – were delayed by more than an hour. Health chiefs say the crisis is leading to deaths.

About 22,883 delays of half an hour or longer were recorded across all hospital trusts in the week to 20 November, figures show. That represents 29% of the 79,076 arrivals by ambulance. The proportion rose as high as 23% during winter 2021-22.

The figures were published by NHS England yesterday and offered the first weekly snapshot of how hospitals are performing this season.



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'Serious safeguarding failures' before murder of Logan Mwangi, 5

Steven Morris

Health professionals and local authority staff missed a series of opportunities to protect Logan Mwangi, the five-year-old boy murdered by his mother, her partner and his stepson, a damning review into the tragedy has concluded.

Staff saw that Logan, whose body was found in a Welsh river in the summer of 2021, had suffered a series of "significant" injuries almost a year before he died but did not pass on their concerns.

Later there was a "lack of curiosity" over the risk that Logan's stepfather, John Cole, posed even after it emerged that he had a series of criminal convictions including assaulting a child, the child practice review said.

The review concluded chances were missed for agencies to share information that could have created a fuller picture of the risk to Logan and that professionals worked in "silos" rather than cooperating effectively.

It meant Logan's voice was "not heard", while the complex, volatile adult relationships around him overshadowed "professionals' line of sight to him". The review team considered the failings "systemic" rather than individual errors.

At a press conference in Bridgend, Paul Mee, chair of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg safeguarding board, apologised for what went wrong, adding: "This review identifies serious failures where agencies could and should have acted differently."

Jan Pickles, the independent chair of the review, said Logan's killers had used the Covid restrictions to "evade scrutiny", adding: "Children were invisible; they were in their homes."

She said Covid also meant "significant changes" were made to the way professionals operated, with remote meetings replacing face-to-face ones. "This undoubtedly had an impact on the robustness of assessments."



Johnson and Truss join rebels against Sunak ban on onshore wind

Peter Walker
Jessica Elgot

Boris Johnson and Liz Truss have joined a growing Tory backbench rebellion over Rishi Sunak's refusal to allow new onshore wind projects in England, in another challenge to the levelling up bill.

The former prime ministers are among about 20 Conservative MPs to sign an amendment to the bill tabled by Simon Clarke, who served as a minister under Johnson and Truss, which would end the de facto ban on new onshore wind that has been in place since 2014.

While Truss supported the resumption of onshore wind, Johnson's decision to back the amendment is striking given that he did not seek to reverse the longstanding policy when he was prime minister.

Clarke's amendment would oblige the government to change planning rules within six months to allow new projects. It is the second major challenge to the bill. Earlier this week, No 10 pulled a scheduled vote on the levelling up bill after a major rebellion over planning policy.

An amendment led by the former cabinet minister Theresa Villiers, and backed by over 50 Tory MPs, seeks to scrap mandatory local housing targets and make them advisory only.

The addition of Johnson and Truss to the rebel ranks with Clarke's amendment adds to the pressure on Sunak over the specific issue of windfarms, and in the sense he lacks authority as the third prime minister since the election, and was appointed without a vote of Tory members.

Since 2014, planning rules have effectively barred any new onshore windfarms in England under a tightening of restrictions imposed by David Cameron's government.

The push for energy independence since Russia's invasion of Ukraine has prompted calls for this to end. Truss had pledged to change the rules but was ousted before she was able to.

During the summer Tory leadership campaign, which Truss won, Sunak set out what he called an "energy sovereignty strategy", which maintained the ban on new onshore wind, prompting Labour to accuse him of "economic illiteracy".

Clarke, who served as chief secretary to the Treasury under Johnson, and as levelling up secretary under Truss, said: "We should let local communities decide whether or not they want onshore wind.

"Onshore wind can lower our constituents' bills, boost our energy independence, and safeguard our environment."



▲ *Boris Johnson visits a windfarm in Cornwall as prime minister last year*





◀ Logan Mwangi was murdered by his mother, Angharad Williamson, her partner, John Coles (pictured above) and Cole's stepson, Craig Mulligan

Logan was first taken to hospital in mid-August 2020 after supposedly falling down the stairs. A number of injuries including bruises to his face and head and a blue mark near his genitals were seen by a doctor.

But Pickles said these were not referred to children's services. "This was a significant missed opportunity for Logan," she said. "Had further information from health been shared, it most likely … would have triggered a child protection assessment."

Dom Hurford, medical director at Cwm Taf Morgannwg University health board, said: "We apologise for failures in our systems that could have presented earlier opportunities to recognise abuse and protect Logan."

Claire Marchant, the head of social services at Bridgend council, said she was deeply sorry that staff had not been able to protect Logan. She added: "The review has identified there were opportunities to share information and better analyse and act on the risks to Logan."

The review concluded that Cole was coercive and manipulative, as well as having an "extensive criminal history". Marchant said: "The parenting assessment of John Cole did not sufficiently assess the risk which his criminal convictions presented."

The report noted that Logan, whose father was of Kenyan heritage, may have suffered because of his race and ethnicity, but this was not fully taken into account.

It said: "Professionals did not fully explore the context of [Logan's] race and ethnicity. With the value of hindsight, we know that [Cole] and [his stepson, Craig Mulligan] held and expressed racist and discriminatory views that one would expect to have made life very hard for [Logan]."

> ***'There were chances to share information and better analyse and act on the risks'***
>
> **Claire Marchant**
> *Bridgend council*

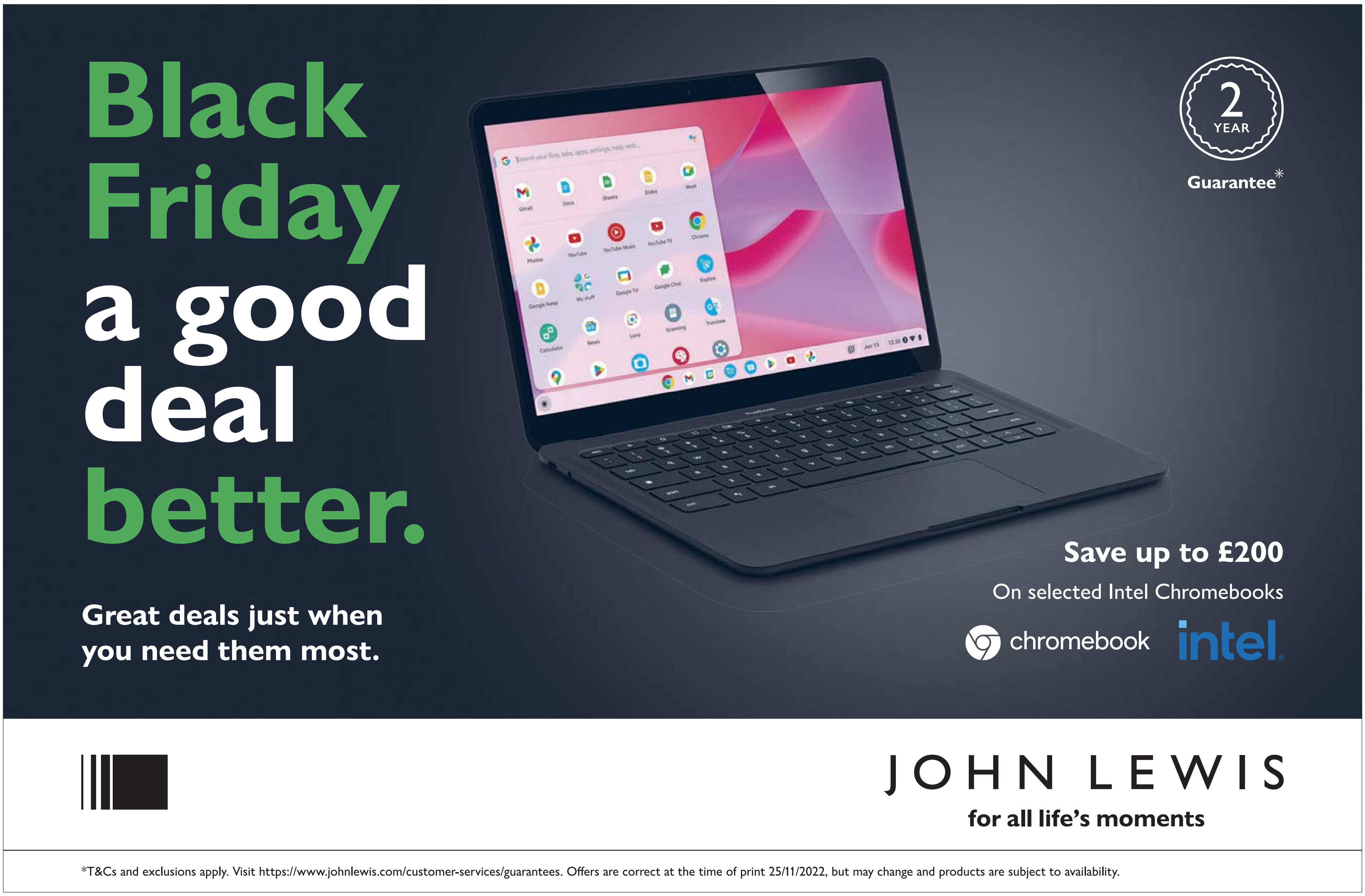
The review team also expressed concern at the speed – just four weeks – with which an assessment was carried out when Cole and Logan's mother, Angharad Williamson, applied to the family court to have Mulligan, who had been taken into local authority care, live with them.

During the trial of the three at Cardiff crown court this year, the jury was told that Mulligan's move into the family home five days before the killing was like throwing a lit match into a powder keg. The review said: "This was an extended family unit with complex dynamics … The panel were concerned that this was a multifaceted assessment that was given four weeks for completion." It is recommending a minimum of 12 weeks.

Cole and Williamson were jailed for at least 29 and 28 years respectively. Mulligan, who was 13 at the time of Logan's murder, was detained for a minimum of 15 years.

The review team made 10 recommendations for local agencies and five for the Welsh government, including considering a full review of health, social care and education, and police recording, information-gathering and sharing systems.

Julie Morgan, the Welsh deputy minister for social services, said: "We must learn the lessons from this review and we accept the recommendations relating to Welsh government."



A game of two halves Migrant workers given no-frills fan zone

Pete Pattisson
Doha

It has the big screen, the pumping music and the Fifa branding, but this is a fan zone with a difference. There are no visiting supporters, no women, no team colours and certainly no beer. The clue is in the venue: a cricket stadium on the edge of Doha. Inside, thousands of mostly south Asian low-wage labourers fill the stands or sit cross-legged on the grassy outfield.

It is a world away from the polished face of Doha that most fans will see. The stadium fan zone is within Asian Town, a shopping and entertainment complex built for Qatar's migrant workers, about 30 minutes' drive from the city centre. Warehouses, workshops and accommodation blocks stretch for miles on one side, housing hundreds of thousands of workers, often in grim, crowded dorms.

On a wall near the entrance to the fan zone, a banner in Arabic, English and Hindi reads: "Thanks for your contributions for delivering the best Fifa World Cup ever."

Many here probably played a part in building the stadiums for the tournament, but gratitude has its limits. While some match tickets went on sale for Qatar residents for just 40 rials (£9), no one the Guardian spoke to had managed to get one. Any that were available were far too expensive for workers who earn as little as £225 a month.

Without a ticket, they cannot register for a Hayya card, which is needed to enter the main fan zones in Doha.

The fan zone, and Asian Town itself, highlight the parallel world that many migrant workers inhabit. Critics say it entrenches divisions, the unspoken message being: you can have your restaurants, shops and fan zone, as long as you don't come to ours.

As the match between Spain and Costa Rica kicks off, Dilip Kumar Mandal, from Nepal, looks thrilled. "I come every night. I like the environment," he says. Asked which team he is supporting, he pauses and says: "The red one."

"I'd like to be in a stadium, but I have no money. Whatever I earn, I have to send home for my children's education," he adds.

Mandal, a mason, is just happy to be there. As Spain score their first goal, he punches the air. "Yes! I knew they'd score," he says.

Stephen* from Ghana sits nearby. He works at the airport, transferring inflight meals to the planes. It's his day off, but during the week, "all I do is work, sleep, work, sleep, work, sleep", he says. Like Dilip, he could not afford a match ticket, but unlike him, he speaks about football as fluently as the Spanish play it. As another goal slides in, he enthuses about Ghana's chances: "I just hope I can get off work to watch," he says.

> *'I'd like to be in a stadium, but I have no money. Whatever I earn I send home'*
>
> **Dilip Kumar Mandal**
> *Nepali migrant worker*

As half-time approaches, hundreds surge towards the stage, and are soon rewarded, not by another goal, but by an MC and her four female dancers. She gives a shout-out to "my African friends" before reeling off the other countries that make up the bulk of Qatar's migrant workforce: India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the Philippines.

There are no team colours or flags on display. With the exception of Ghana, none of these nations qualified for the World Cup and so decisions about who to support appear to be determined by a favourite player or a shirt colour.

Rajbanshi, from Nepal, says a ticket for a match costs too much - half his monthly salary - but he does not seem to care. "It's better to watch here!" After Spain stroll to a 7-0 win, the workers who helped make the tournament possible saunter back to their dorms, a band of south Indian drummers sending them on their way.

* *Name changed to protect identity*







◀ *Migrant workers watch a group match at a separate fan zone in a cricket ground on the edge of Doha*
PHOTOGRAPH: MARKO ĐURICA/ REUTERS

Man on murder charge over fire deaths of mother and two children

Jessica Murray
Midlands correspondent

A man has been charged with the murders of a mother and two young children who died after a fire in their home in Nottingham.

Nottinghamshire police said yesterday that Jamie Barrow, 31, of Fairisle Close, Clifton, had been charged with three counts of murder.

Fatoumatta Hydara, 28, and her daughters, Fatimah Drammeh, 3, and one-year-old Naeemah Drammeh, all died from smoke inhalation after a blaze at their home on Sunday.

A joint fire and police investigation concluded the fire was started deliberately. Barrow has been remanded into custody and will appear at Nottingham magistrates court today.

Rob Griffin, an assistant chief constable, said: "Our thoughts remain with the family at this incredibly painful time, as well as the communities that have been affected by this most tragic of incidents. The grief this family has been put through is incomprehensible.

"The family are aware of this development and I would like to sincerely thank them for their patience and understanding as we do everything we possibly can to gain justice for Fatoumatta, Fatimah and Naeemah."

They were taken to Queen's medical centre, where the children were pronounced dead shortly after arrival. Hydara was placed on life support before she died on Tuesday.

The children's father and Hydara's husband, Aboubacarr Drammeh, 40, was in the US at the time of the fire. He flew back to the UK and visited the scene of the fire on Monday, where he told reporters he "hadn't started to come to terms with what has happened".

"I am just grieving. I have just flown in from America," he said. "I don't know what has happened here. This is just so upsetting."



▲ *Fatoumatta Hydara with her daughters Naeemah and Fatimah*



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Dr Martens price rises take shine off increased sales

Sarah Butler

Dr Martens is to step up the price of its classic boots by 6%, as it says the cost of labour, energy and supplies, including the bouncy soles and leather, has risen.

The Northamptonshire-based footwear group will increase prices for the second year in a row on its boots, which currently cost about £159, adding £10 to the price. The rise will come next autumn to reflect higher production costs that the company has now locked in over the course of next year.



▲ *The cost of Dr Martens boots will rise by 6% in autumn next year*

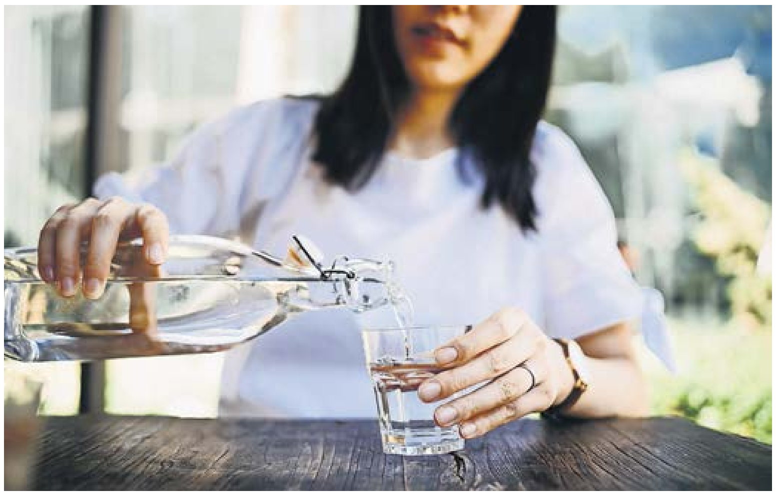
Announcing its half-year results, Dr Martens revealed a disappointing 5% fall in pretax profits in the six months to 30 September despite a 13% rise in sales, as the company said it had invested more in marketing, staff and new stores.

The firm said about £10m of sales expected during the period were delayed because of strikes at the port in Felixstowe and staff shortages at its distribution centre in the Netherlands.

Kenny Wilson, the chief executive of Dr Martens, said he was "very confident about our outlook for Christmas". He said the group was still seeing inflation in the cost of supplies "across the board", from the oil-based product used to make its soles, to leather and energy. "We will only put prices up to cover inflation," Wilson added.

Staff costs are rising, and Dr Martens is offering a £500 cost of living bonus to about 2,000 of its 3,500 workers around the world.

Shares dived almost 24% as the company warned of "variable trading" in recent weeks and said that profit margins would take a hit.



▲ *The study found daily water requirements vary widely* PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

Eight glasses of water a day 'often excessive'

Hannah Devlin
Science correspondent

A recommendation to drink eight glasses of water a day is likely to be excessive for most people, according to scientists.

The suggestion has become accepted wisdom and often appears in health guidance. However, the latest work - the most rigorous study to date on water turnover -reveals that people have a wide range of water intakes. Many people only require about 1.5 to 1.8 litres a day, lower than the two litres typically recommended, the research suggests.

"The current recommendation is not supported scientifically at all," said Yosuke Yamada of the National Institute of Biomedical Innovation, Health and Nutrition in Japan, and one of the paper's first authors. "Most of the scientists are not sure where this recommendation came from."

One issue is that previous estimates of water requirements have tended to ignore the water content of food, which can contribute a substantial proportion of our overall intake.

"If you just eat bread and bacon and eggs you will not get much water from food, but if you eat meat, vegetables, fish, pasta and rice you can get about 50% of your water needs from food," said Yamada.

The study, published in the journal Science, assessed the water intake of 5,604 people aged between eight days and 96 years old from 23 countries. The research involved people drinking a glass of water in which some of the hydrogen molecules were replaced by a stable isotope of the element deuterium, which is found naturally in the human body and is harmless.

The rate of elimination of the extra deuterium reveals how quickly water in the body is turned over, and the study found the measure varied widely depending on a person's age, gender, activity levels and surroundings. Those in hot and humid climates and at high altitudes as well as athletes and pregnant or breastfeeding women had higher turnover, meaning they need to drink more water.

Energy expenditure is the biggest factor in water turnover, with the highest values observed in men aged 20-35, who turned over an average of 4.2 litres a day. This decreased with age, averaging 2.5 litres a day for men in their 90s.

Women aged 20-40 averaged a turnover of 3.3 litres, which also declined to 2.5 litres by the age of 90. Athletes use about a litre more than non-athletes. And newborn babies turned over the largest proportion daily, replacing about 28% of the water in their bodies every day.

"This study shows that the common suggestion that we should all be drinking eight glasses of water (or around two litres a day) is probably too high for most people in most situations and a one-size-fits-all policy for water intake is not supported by this data," said Prof John Speakman, of the University of Aberdeen and a co-author.

Speakman added that, in practice, "I think it's a recommendation that many people just ignore and follow what their body is telling them".



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'An explosion'

What is behind the huge rise in girls questioning their gender identity?

Amelia Gentleman



Earlier this year, a team of NHS researchers were asked to investigate why there had been such a huge rise in the number of biological girls seeking referrals to gender clinics. The figures alone do seem remarkable.

According to a study commissioned by NHS England, 10 years ago there were just under 250 referrals, most of them biological boys, to the Gender Identity Development Service (Gids), run by the Tavistock and Portman NHS foundation trust in London. Last year, there were more than 5,000 - double the previous year. And the largest group, about two-thirds, now consists of "birth-registered females first presenting in adolescence with gender-related distress", the report said.

The review team is looking into the causes behind "the considerable increase in the number of referrals" and the changing case mix, but is not expected to publish any findings until next year. Meanwhile, clinicians and parents are trying to make sense of it themselves.

Over recent months, the Guardian has interviewed 11 parents of gender-questioning biological girls (some of whom have transitioned to become trans boys), and six paediatricians and child psychiatrists, to discuss their views and experiences. For many of them, it has been a difficult and emotionally draining time.

Their testimony reflects the lack of consensus within the medical profession about how best to proceed if a child experiences gender dysphoria - and, in turn, how this confusion contributes to the central dilemma faced by concerned parents: how should they support their child during what may be the most challenging period of their lives?

Do they accept them changing their name, gender and pronouns at home and at school and investigating medical options, or should they try to help their child to accept their natal sex?

While some parents said they had embraced their child's decision and welcomed the societal changes that had made this step possible, others felt confused by their child's desire to change their body.

Several parents said they had been relaxed when their daughters initially began identifying as non-binary, but became uneasy



when they said they wanted to take puberty blockers or cross-sex hormones and began binding their breasts. Some spoke of their anxiety and uncertainty about how to respond, particularly when their child was unhappy.

The mother of one biological girl who came out as trans at the age of 12 said it was "very difficult to describe the feeling of being the parent of a trans-identified child".

This mother feared they were heading towards medical intervention that might prove unnecessary. "As she got older … we had less control. Living with that fear is one of the toughest experiences I've had."

Her child, who recently started university, now describes herself as non-binary, is happy to be referred to as she, and is no longer seeking medical treatment.

The uncertainty parents felt was compounded by the highly polarised debate - within the NHS, politics and the media - about how parents and professionals should respond to children who express distress about their gender.

"We were terrified of being accused of being bigoted," said the woman, who asked to remain anonymous to protect her child's privacy. "We felt we were expected to accept her decision unhesitatingly. I felt so apologetic that I was questioning whether my miserable teenage daughter was genuinely a boy," she said.

'No longer a taboo'

The rise in the number of biological girls seeking referrals to Gids was set out in an interim report by Dr Hilary Cass, the paediatrician commissioned to conduct a review of the services provided by the NHS to children and young people questioning their gender identity.

The trend was confirmed by clinicians who spoke to the Guardian. "In the past few years it has become an explosion. Many of us feel confused by what has happened, and it's often hard to talk about it to colleagues," said a London-based psychiatrist working in a child and adolescent mental health unit, who has been a consultant for the past 17 years.

Like all NHS employees interviewed, she asked for anonymity because of the sensitivity of the subject. "I might have seen one child with gender dysphoria once every two years when I started practising. It was very niche and rare." Now, somewhere between 10% and 20% of her caseload is made up of adolescents registered as female at birth who identify as non-binary or trans, with just an occasional male-registered teenager who identifies as trans.

Another senior child psychiatrist said biological girls who wanted to transition had made up about 5% of her caseload. "In the last five to 10 years we've seen a huge surge in young women who, at the age of around 12 or 13, want to become boys. They've changed their name and they are pressing … to have hormones or puberty blockers."

The psychiatrist added: "Often those girls are children who are going through the normal identity and developmental problems of adolescence and finding a solution for themselves in this way."

Greater awareness of trans issues is likely to be one common-sense explanation for the rise in requests for referrals.

"Left-handedness increased over time after we stopped punishing left-handed children in schools, because some children are naturally left-handed and were now able to express it," said Cleo Madeleine, a spokesperson for the trans support group Gendered Intelligence. "Increased visibility and acceptance of trans people has led to a gradual increase in young people who feel comfortable expressing their trans identity. The most important thing is to recognise that this is not a problem to be solved or a bad outcome."

The mother of a 17-year-old A-level student (who came out as trans at 13) agreed: "It's discussed so much more - on Facebook and on social media. It's no longer a taboo." She is confident this was the right decision for her child. "I think I wondered if this was a phase, but I didn't look to dissuade him. As he began to socially transition he was a different person. It has made him happier," she said.

Her trans son has a weekend job to pay for his private testosterone prescription, because the NHS waiting list is too long, and the family are saving up for the £6,000 cost of breast removal. "He would like to get it done as close to his 18th birthday as possible, so he can start afresh at university."

Increased awareness may well be a factor. But most of the research in this field has been based on predominantly birth-registered males - not females.

The Cass report explained that relatively little was known about the causes of gender dysphoria in biological girls, or the outcomes for those who received treatment.

"At present, we have the least information for the largest group of patients - birth-registered females first presenting in early teen years," it said. "Since the rapid increase in this group began around 2015, they will not reach late 20s for another five-plus years, which would be the best time to assess longer-term wellbeing."

The NHS review will help to shine some light on this issue - but it may be years before a clear picture emerges.

The dilemma for parents has hardly been helped by the confusing guidelines. They are puzzled by conflicting advice from doctors and trans rights groups about what their child may be going through. Could it be a temporary exploration of gender identity, potentially the manifestation of other forms of distress? Or is it an innate experience for which treatment is required?

The definition of gender dysphoria is controversial in itself, and in England there is no consensus among clinicians over whether an adolescent's desire to transition should be quickly affirmed or if they should be encouraged to pause before changing their name or starting hormone treatment.

The Cass report found there was "a lack of agreement, and in many instances a lack of open discussion" about the best approach to take. "The disagreement and polarisation is heightened when potentially irreversible treatments are given to children and young people, when the evidence base underlying the treatments is inconclusive," it added.

Anyone looking for clarity from NHS England's most recent draft guidelines on how to support under-18s experiencing what it calls "gender incongruence" may not find it helpful.

There is a lack of consensus within the medical profession about how best to proceed if a child experiences gender dysphoria

Published in October, the draft seems to put greater emphasis on the possibility that, for some, particularly pre-pubescent, children, this may be a "transient phase". It also suggests it is not a "neutral act" to help children transition socially (by using preferred names and pronouns) while they explore their gender identity, and stresses that more research is needed to "gather further evidence on the safety, potential benefits and harms" of puberty blockers.

In terms of practical advice, it does not go much beyond that.

Many of the parents who spoke to the Guardian said they had struggled with the uncertainty, even in cases where they acknowledged that medical transition may be the correct outcome for some.

The Tavistock stresses that there is no set treatment pathway, and only about 20% of those referred to the service go on to be prescribed puberty blockers or cross-sex hormones on the NHS (although long waiting lists mean some people seek treatment in the private sector, or will receive treatment only when they have progressed to adult NHS services at 18).

Parental confusion has been heightened by NHS England's announcement in July that the Tavistock's gender identity clinic would close next year and be replaced by new regional centres. This happened after the Cass review said the current model, with its long delays, was leaving young people "at considerable risk" of poor mental health and distress, and that having one clinic was not "a safe or viable long-term option".

Parental anxiety

With little research to draw upon, no consensus among clinicians and confusing guidelines, parents have differing explanations for what may have prompted their child's desire to identify as male.

Some point to puberty, periods and unease with a changing body shape coinciding with the interest in becoming gender non-conforming.

Others have questioned whether their child's autism might be a relevant factor. (The Cass report stated that approximately one-third of children and young people being referred to the Tavistock had autism or other types of neurodiversity.)

And others wonder if pre-existing signs of depression and mental health problems have been the cause or the result of gender uncertainty. Possible influences they cite include childhood bullying, sexual harassment and abuse and the hyper-sexualisation of society, or a child's early understanding of sexism, making them feel it may be easier to live as a man than as a woman.

Some believe the extended isolation children experienced during Covid is relevant - for example, Google searches for "top surgery", double mastectomies, soared during this period.

Many are aware of online content that has educated their children about gender, and of the influence of YouTubers, Tumblr accounts and TikTok personalities where medical transitions are documented in detail (footage of recoveries from double mastectomies and phalloplasty, or "bottom surgery", has been watched by hundreds of thousands).

A 20-year-old medical student who came out as a trans boy at 16, having told his parents the year before that he was a lesbian, and who spent £8,000 on private breast removal earlier this year, said the realisation had been "a lightbulb moment". He had watched a lot of YouTube content on LGBTQ+ issues. "From watching that I was able to educate myself. I'd always felt that something was not right. Everything made much more sense afterwards," he said. His parents were "incredibly supportive".

But some parents have been frustrated by the speed with which schools have adopted their child's new identity, uncertain about the implications.

One father, whose child came out

Continued *on page 21*

5,000

Referrals to the NHS Gender Identity Development Service in 2021, with birth-registered females the majority

250

Number of people referred to the service 10 years ago, the majority of whom were biological boys





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'I have a flat, a partner, a good job – it is not all doom and gloom. I'm very comfortable living as a guy, I've done that for 15 years'

Continued *from page 19*

as a trans boy three years ago at the age of 11, with the approval of his estranged wife, said he had initially supported the decision. However, he had become increasingly sceptical about whether it was helping his child. He said he felt disconcerted by the school's readiness to adopt the child's male identity before any specialist assessment had occurred.

"We went from nothing to everything in three months. I know now that a lot of the explanations of what they were feeling came from an internet script. All my concerns were minimised," he said. "Everyone told me it was a totally benign step to change names, and pronouns. The school's position was: 'If you say you are a boy, you're a boy,'" he said. "I trusted them that it was a good idea."

He struggles with the new pronouns but agreed to the new male name, and reluctantly bought, at the 11-year-old's request, a crocheted penis and testicles to wear inside their underwear.

"I've said no to a chest binder and puberty blockers. I kept asking: 'What's wrong with being a girl? What problem are we trying to fix?'" He said he believed the decision was triggered by severe bullying in primary school, undiagnosed autism and a few influential YouTubers.

"She's interested in boys now and describes herself as a gay boy. None of this has made her happier."

One mother of an adolescent who came out as a lesbian aged 13 three years ago, and came out as a trans boy nine months later, said she and her husband had wanted to be supportive. "We said: 'OK, no matter what, we love you,' and tried to be very neutral about it. She told me she wanted to go to the GP to get a referral to the Tavistock, so we went and we were referred. I was absolutely fine with gender non-conformity."

But her views on social, medical and surgical transition evolved as she did more research. She said no when her child asked to speed up the process by going private, which would have allowed them to start puberty blockers. "My daughter has barely spoken to me for three years because I haven't continued with the referral process. Parents are in a very difficult position."

Two years ago, a grassroots support group started campaigning for "evidence-based care". Called Bayswater Support, it now represents the parents of about 500 trans-identified adolescents – and its membership is growing rapidly.

The group says about 70% of the children it represents were registered as female at birth; 80% experienced bullying before identifying as trans and more than 50% had come out as lesbian, gay or bisexual. A spokesperson said: "Our members commonly describe their child's trans identity as overshadowing factors such as poor mental health, neurodevelopmental conditions like autism and ADHD, social factors like bullying and not fitting in with their peer group, emerging same-sex attraction, serious safeguarding issues – and often puberty itself."

Increased scrutiny

There is one thing that all sides on this debate would probably agree on: the increased scrutiny of the subject has made life much harder for trans adolescents and their families.

A 29-year-old charity worker who transitioned 13 years ago, in the summer after sitting GCSEs, told the Guardian: "Trans kids weren't as hotly debated then, it was much less politicised. Trans people didn't have that level of visibility – and that might be seen as a negative, but it also meant that trans people were left alone."

He said he now tried to avoid reading newspaper reports, and was suspicious of research into what might be causing an increase in the number of biological girls identifying as boys. "I would guess it's because trans people are more able to find other trans people. Research into the cause of a marginalised identity can make you feel nervous. It makes me wonder: why would you want to ask that question?"

He said his mother had been very supportive, and they had attended a residential camp organised by the charity Mermaids. She had paid for a private referral and supported him through medical transition, including cross-sex hormones, a hysterectomy and double mastectomy.

"Initially she was confused. She was obviously concerned about what I would go through. She had, I suppose, the normal feelings that any parent would have when suddenly their child tells them: 'Actually, I'm a boy and I don't feel comfortable in my body, and I want to go through these processes.' I imagine it's a very helpless feeling.

"Now she talks to other parents to help them understand that if your child comes out as trans, their life will be fine with the right support. I have a flat, a partner, a good job – it is not all doom and gloom. Trans kids turn into trans adults, and that's fine. Of course there's anxiety because it's an unknown, but keep talking."

He said that now he barely thought about the process of transitioning, and did not have an easy answer to what it meant to be a man. "I can't tell you, and I think if you asked my [male] partner, he wouldn't know either. I'm very comfortable living as a guy, I've done that for 15 years."



Case studies

'I didn't tell Mum about being trans at the start'

Two 20-year-olds – and two different stories about fitting in, coming out and the anxieties surrounding trans issues

'I felt I didn't fit in'

A 20-year-old student who describes herself as trans-adjacent spent five years living as a boy, from the age of 13. She hadn't had many close friends at primary school and had been diagnosed with autism when she was 12. She spent a lot of time on Tumblr following trans groups and became close to a friend at her girls' school who also came out as trans. Shortly after she came out as trans, a third person in the year came out; the two others have since medically transitioned, but she has decided not to.

"I don't know how much of it is because I am autistic. I felt I didn't fit in with any of the girls," said the student, who now uses a gender-neutral name but said she was happy to be described using she/her pronouns. She didn't initially want to tell her mother she was trans because of a misunderstanding they had had when she came out as gay at 12.

"My mum said: 'That's fine, but you're too young to know.' I think now what she was trying to say was: 'No matter what, we will accept you, but you're really young, you don't need to worry about what box you're in.'

"I think then I took it much too literally. So I didn't talk to her about being trans at the start. I was really struggling in school. I think being a girl is hard for a lot of people when you are going through puberty and you are really unhappy. It's quite easy to want to escape from that."

She was on antidepressants. Her parents began the process of a referral to the Tavistock Gender Identity Development Service in London, but decided against pursuing it. "I started binding with duct tape because I didn't have access to a breast binder. I wanted my chest to be flat. I slept with it. It helped me alleviate distress. I still have pain in my ribs. I identified as trans masculine, as a trans man.

"I wasn't so obsessed with being referred to as male but I did want the school to use he pronouns."

When she moved to a sixth form college to do A-levels, she became more interested in her work and less interested in identity. She is still known by her new name but is no longer thinking about transitioning. "I think there might be people who identify as trans, who were like me, who were just unhappy, and there are others who are just trans. There are people who have medically transitioned and for whom that is completely the right option. Trans people have existed for a very long time."

'I wanted to support him'

The mother of a 20-year-old trans student says the process has been stressful but, on balance, she believes her child is now happier.

"My son, who was then my daughter, came out as a lesbian at 13 or 14. After they turned 15 my husband and I were called into school … and it turned out to be for an announcement that my daughter was now my son. I think the meeting was done that way because my son was concerned particularly about how his dad would react, and he needed there to be other people there. His dad's reaction was quite hostile. He said that, for one thing, my son was being ridiculous, and for another thing, about to ruin his life.

"I didn't understand everything, but I wanted to support him. I didn't feel I should interfere in my son's treatment. Instead I got involved in the practicalities of getting his name changed, speaking to the school about toilets and changing rooms. He went on testosterone at 18. I don't think he will have surgery; the thought of it makes him quite anxious.

"In any case he has passed as male for quite some time now."

She said the increased awareness of trans issues via the media made it easier for children who might be trans to communicate with others. "In the 90s, when trans people began to be presented in the media it was very much done for shock value. Things have changed."

She said the process had been stressful. "But in the end I realised that people make all sorts of decisions that have long-term, knock-on effects that can't be imagined at the time. I think transitioning has been a positive step for my son. His mental health is much improved – he socialises now rather than just hiding away."



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Libeskind adds voice to campaign against sale of Schwitters' art studio

Robyn Vinter
North of England correspondent

The architect Daniel Libeskind has condemned plans to sell off a Cumbrian barn once owned by the celebrated modernist artist Kurt Schwitters.

Merz Barn, near Elterwater, is set to be put up for auction next month after funding could not be found to save the studio, which Schwitters, an anti-fascist artist, had turned into an artwork.

Libeskind said it was "a real pity" the custodians were being forced to sell the building, which has received donations from the artists Bridget Riley, Antony Gormley, Damien Hirst and Tacita Dean.

The architect, who was responsible for the Grand Canal Theatre (now called the Bord Gáis Energy theatre) in Dublin and the Imperial War Museum North in Greater Manchester, said: "It's a real pity – and a sign of the times – that Schwitters' life-affirming [Merz Barn] is possibly about to be destroyed.

"As one of the only art 'shrines' to freedom in a world increasingly threatened with authoritarianism, it should be preserved as a warning against propaganda and conformity."

Schwitters, an anti-fascist German artist who fled from the Nazis to Norway in 1937 before settling in the Lake District in 1945, used the studio to create works with subversive ideas which went on to shape British art.

His use of found objects and rubbish to create collages and surprising imagery laid the foundations for both pop art and today's thriving conceptual art scene.

He imagined Merz Barn becoming a modernist cave, with artefacts embedded in the cement walls. Most of what he managed to complete before his death in 1948 is on display at Newcastle University's Hatton Gallery.

Ian Hunter and Celia Larner, Schwitters devotees who have maintained and championed the barn since 2006, gave up their battle to preserve the building for posterity.

"It is a really shocking moment for us," Hunter said in October. "This is such an important site, so valued by many artists, including the late architect Zaha Hadid. But we have run out of money and will have to put the whole estate up for sale in the new year."

Hunter and Larner, who jointly founded the Littoral Trust to safeguard Merz Barn, say they have made nine substantial applications for renewed Arts Council funding over the past decade, each of which has been rejected, despite the support of prominent figures including the broadcaster Melvyn Bragg and the former Conservative arts minister Ed Vaizey.

"This summer, we realised how tired we were," Hunter said. "I am 75 and Celia is 85. We have already sold our two homes in the area to fund maintenance of the barn and there is nothing else we can do.

"It was the Arts Council that originally encouraged us to take on the project, and they were generous with capital funds and with supporting our artistic programme. But they changed their minds and have not told us why."

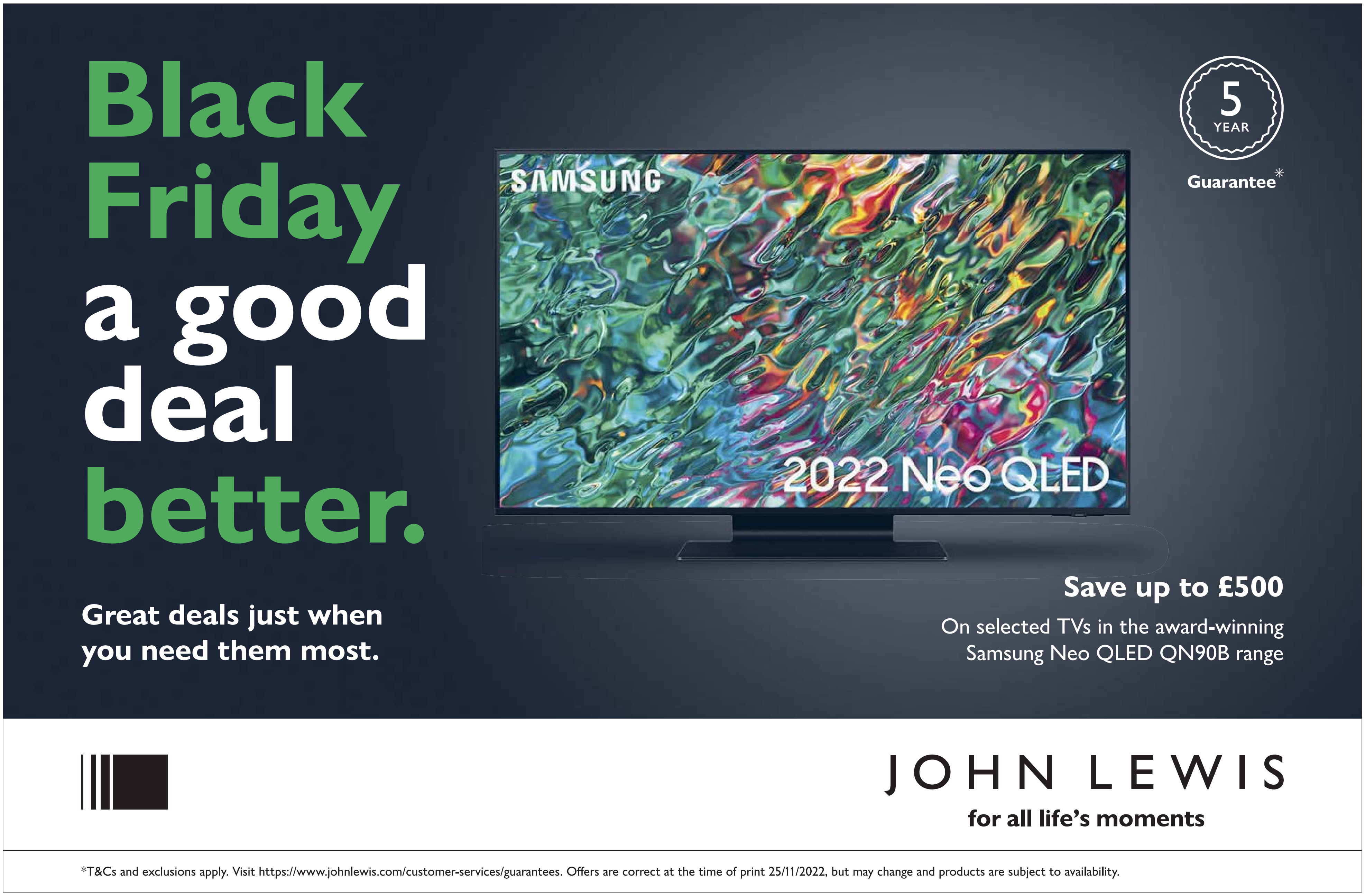




▲ *Merz Barn was pivotal in the career of Kurt Schwitters, above right*
PHOTOGRAPH: LITTORAL TRUST



▼ *Daniel Libeskind, as well as Melvyn Bragg and Ed Vaizey, have called for the barn to be saved*




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Online safety bill revived with ban for 'deepfake' porn

Alex Hern
Technology editor

Nonconsensual "deepfake" pornography and "downblousing" will be made illegal when the online safety bill returns to parliament in December, the government has announced.

Explicit images taken without consent – with hidden cameras or surreptitious photography – will be criminalised, including so-called downblousing pictures. A previous law banning "upskirt" voyeurism left a loophole that failed to tackle images that weren't taken with the intent of photographing genitals or buttocks.

Those who share pornographic "deepfakes" – explicit images or videos that have been manipulated to look like someone – could be jailed under the proposed changes.

Prof Penney Lewis of the Law Commission, which recommended the new offences be created, said: "Taking or sharing intimate images of a person without their consent can inflict lasting damage. We are pleased that the government will take forward our recommendations to strengthen the law. A new set of offences will capture a wider range of abusive behaviours, ensuring that more perpetrators of these deeply harmful acts face prosecution."

The justice secretary, Dominic Raab, said: "Our changes will give police and prosecutors the powers they need to bring these cowards to justice and safeguard women and girls from such vile abuse."

It comes as the online safety bill will return to parliament in December, the Commons leader, Penny Mordaunt, has confirmed.

The bill's future has been in doubt since the resignation of Boris Johnson forced it to be pulled from business papers in the summer. Now, with its fourth prime minister and seventh culture secretary since it was proposed in the online harms white paper, the bill is likely to be enacted.

Child safety groups welcomed its return, but others have called for the bill to be scrapped. The Open Rights Group says it isn't fit for purpose, and threatens free speech. Jim Killock, the executive director, said it "threatens 40 million users of WhatsApp and other messengers with constant surveillance of their private messages".



▲ *Tamara Rojo with English National Ballet. Defunding London arts was simplistic decision-making, she said* PHOTOGRAPH: TRISTRAM KENTON/THE GUARDIAN

Tamara Rojo says denying London arts funding 'will help no one'

Nadia Khomami
Arts and culture correspondent

One of the ballet world's biggest stars has accused Arts Council England of "simplistic" decision-making by moving arts funding out of London.

Tamara Rojo, the outgoing artistic director at English National Ballet, said "punishing" the capital would not help anybody, and expressed concern about Britain's future as a global centre for culture.

"I'm not sure that punishing London is going to help anybody else," Rojo told the BBC.

A bitter battle has erupted over the Arts Council's decision to slash £50m a year from arts organisations in London in its 2023-26 settlement to fulfil a government instruction to divert money away from the capital as part of the levelling up programme.

A number of British arts organisations have been removed entirely from the council's national portfolio, including the English National Opera, which has had its £12.8m annual grant cut to zero and told it must move outside London – potentially to Manchester – to qualify for future grants.

ENO chiefs have objected to the decision and warned it would "decimate" the 100-year-old company, while public figures, such as Juliet Stevenson, Maxine Peake and Melvyn Bragg, have lent their names to protests, accusing the council of "cultural vandalism".

The ENO has said it is not against moving to Manchester but is against "arbitrarily plucking a location without any consultation" and proposing an "unrealistic time frame".

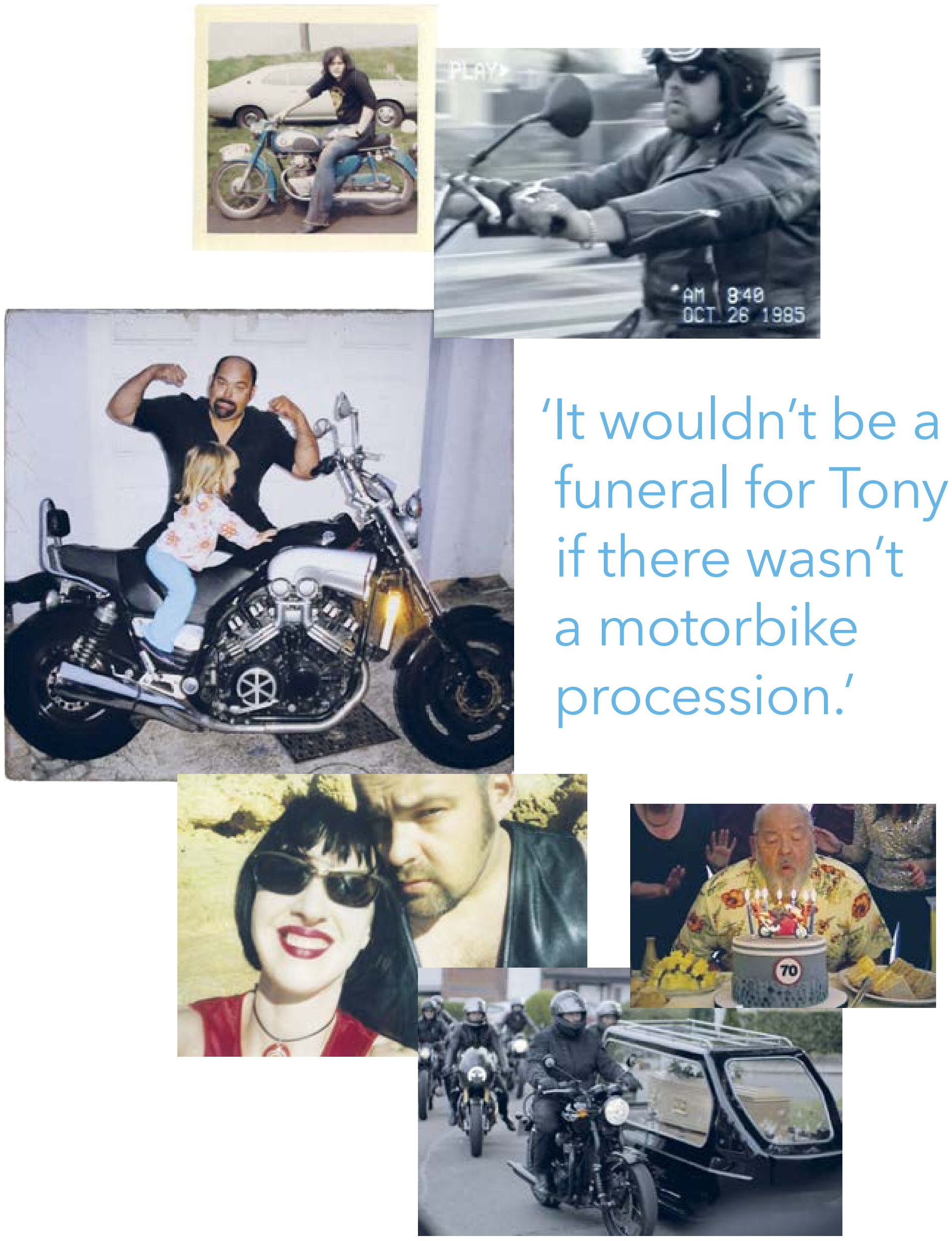
Rojo leaves English National Ballet for San Francisco Ballet this week after 10 years at the helm. The ENB faces a 5% drop in income.

According to the BBC, the Spanish dancer – who arrived in Britain as a relative unknown before becoming the principal at the Royal Ballet and then the ENB – said cultural institutions in capital cities drove creativity and brought wealth, cohesion, identity, investment and tourism.

She said she was "very grateful" to the UK because "Britain opened its arms to a Spanish immigrant that didn't speak any English". But post-Brexit visa rules risked stopping others like her from coming to Britain. "I would not have passed the English test. And since I hadn't achieved anything yet, I would not have had the points [to get a visa]."

> ***'I would not have passed the English test [under Brexit rules] and not got a visa as I hadn't achieved anything'***
>
> **Tamara Rojo**
> *Ballet dancer*





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Baker wants to reopen Brexit trade deal to end protocol row

Lisa O'Carroll
Brexit correspondent

The Northern Ireland minister, Steve Baker, is proposing reopening the Brexit trade agreement that David Frost struck with the EU, as a means of fixing the problems caused by the Northern Ireland protocol. The proposal comes as Rishi Sunak moves to quell a rebellion in the Conservative party over suggestions that Downing Street was considering a Swiss-style relationship with the EU to ease wider trade barriers on food and agricultural products.

In a confidential paper circulating in the Northern Ireland Office, Baker outlines potential ways of removing the role of the European court of justice (ECJ) in disputes, something unionists and the Eurosceptic European Research Group are demanding.

The proposals essentially revisit a sequencing argument the UK lost in 2017 while the Tory party was in disarray over whether to stay in the EU customs union and single market.

When it did not get the necessary commitment from the then prime minister, Theresa May, the EU decided the Northern Ireland protocol should be placed in the legally binding withdrawal agreement and not the trade deal. In the paper, Baker suggests reversing that sequencing in retrospect to end the row over the Northern Ireland protocol. He suggests updating the trade agreement by adding a "customs cooperation chapter" and changing the protocol to include a dispute mechanism that does not involve the ECJ.

But experts say it could be an insurmountable challenge. "All of this is theoretically possible but whether the EU would agree to it is another issue," said Catherine Barnard, professor of EU law at Cambridge University and deputy director of the thinktank UK in a Changing Europe. She said the EU had "taken a very strong line" that the ECJ must have a role in the protocol if Northern Ireland were to remain in a halfway house – following UK and EU rules on trade.

Katy Hayward, professor of political sociology at Queen's University Belfast, said it was difficult to see the EU revisiting deals that took four tumultuous years of negotiation.



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iPhone 13 Pro Max	36 months x	£29 =	£1,044 +	£49 =	£1,093	0%	0% (This means interest free credit)	£1,093	Unlimited Max + 4 Xtra Benefits	£26	24 Months

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Family of boy killed by mould say housing board must resign now



▲ *Awaab Ishak, two, died as a result of mould in his social housing flat*

Robert Booth
Social affairs correspondent

The family of Awaab Ishak, the two-year-old who died as a result of mould in a social housing flat, have said they have no confidence in the board of the landlord body and have called for their mass resignation.

After a meeting in Rochdale yesterday with Michael Gove, the secretary of state for levelling up, housing and communities, they said in a statement "while the current board remains, there is an ever-present risk and danger to Rochdale Boroughwide Housing tenants".

Last week the housing association board backed RBH's £157,000-a -year chief executive, Gareth Swarbrick, despite a coroner finding that exposure to persistent black mould on the walls of the family's rented home was a cause of the child's death in 2020 and that the landlord had repeatedly failed to fix it, blaming the mould on "family lifestyle".

The board only sacked Swarbrick on Saturday after a public and political outcry and a fresh demand from Awaab's family for "accountability". RBH did not concede that it was wrong to make assumptions that the cause of the mould was down to "lifestyle" issues until Tuesday – a week after the inquest verdict.

"The family are struggling to grapple with the fact that, while grieving the loss of their child, RBH were expressing confidence in their CEO," the family statement said. "They also cannot understand why it took so long for RBH to, in any way, acknowledge that it was wrong for them to have made 'assumptions' about the lifestyle of Mr Abdullah and Ms Amin [Awaab's parents] – particularly given the coroner's findings.

"RBH have immediate and urgent issues that need to be addressed to ensure the safety of their tenants. The family does not feel this board has the competence or credibility to do the job."

They concluded that they "felt ignored by RBH, but feel warmed that the public are listening".

Gove also met RBH's leadership, hours after he cut off £1m in capital funding to it and warned that other failing providers would not get future capital funding either.

A source close to Gove described the meeting as "unsatisfactory".

"They yet again failed to answer basic questions about their operations and how they will ensure that tenants are safe in their homes," the source said.

"The secretary of state does not have confidence in the leadership of RBH and will continue to pay very close attention to their work, in close cooperation with the regulator. He will not hesitate to take further action if necessary."

Asked about the family's call for the board to quit, the RBH board said it acknowledged again "that we got things wrong and how deeply sorry we are for the loss of Awaab.

"We are absolutely focused on improving the quality of our existing homes and improving any operational areas where we have previously under performed.

"Our immediate priority is to maintain the stability of the organisation and to appoint a new interim chief executive which we are in the process of doing. The board is reflecting on the appropriate blend of skills and experience needed to lead the organisation going forward."

Awaab's family said Gove had shown support for a proposed "Awaab's law" which would require social landlords to repair homes rapidly if a medical professional warns there is a risk to residents' health and would require landlords to investigate reports of damp and mould within a fortnight.

Music review

Fast rising stars on playfully good form

Wet Leg
O2 Kentish Town Forum
★★★★☆

Dorian Lynskey

Google's "people also ask" feature is a useful insight into public opinion. Some of the questions asked about the rapidly ascending Isle of Wight duo Wet Leg are easily answered. "What does Wet Leg mean in slang?" Nothing. "Is Wet Leg a couple?" No. Others require some explication: "Why is Wet Leg so popular?" and, best of all, "What's up with Wet Leg?"

The tale of Rhian Teasdale and Hester Chambers is the most cheering pop story of the year. They formed a band three years ago in merry desperation after their previous, separate efforts at breaking into music had failed, only for their debut single, the rampaging, absurd Chaise Longue, to become a lightning-in-a-bottle hit beloved by Iggy Pop and Dave Grohl. (Barack Obama favours the bad-party anthem Angelica.)

Their debut album went to No 1 and earned them five Grammy nominations. Next summer they will support Pulp at Finsbury Park and Harry Styles at Wembley Stadium. The 2,300-capacity Forum must have been booked before everything kicked off but they've wisely decided to stick with the smaller venues while they can.

It's harder than it looks to make relatable indie rock - witty scenes from everyday life set to noisy melodies - with such irresistible vim.

Each song is expertly engineered to deliver multiple hits of pleasure, half of which derive from Teasdale's ability to twist a syllable just so. Her playfully charismatic delivery makes each song feel as if you're hearing a riotous anecdote from a good friend. "Happy Wednesday," says Teasdale, who appears to be dressed as a dairy farmer in a long skirt and headscarf. "Otherwise known as little Saturday."



▲ *Wet Leg's Hester Chambers and Rhian Teasdale at Kentish Town - offering expertly engineered songs*
PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN WILLIAMS/REX

> ***Wet Leg project fun even though their lyrics speak of ghastly boyfriends and wasted time***

Wet Leg always manages to project fun, even though their lyrics often speak of frustration, ennui, ghastly boyfriends and wasted time. "And now I'm almost 28 / Still getting off my stupid face," Teasdale laments on the shaggy, wistful I Don't Wanna Go Out.

With three additional band members, they make a terrific racket. Their brisk, lean set - one hour, no encores - features almost the entire album plus two unreleased songs. I Want to Be Abducted (By a UFO) is as daft as the Ramonesy title implies, while the eerie ballad Obvious has a touch of Goldfrapp, theremin and all.

They can spring a surprise. While Elastica and Courtney Barnett are no-brainer reference points for sardonic punk-pop, it's striking tonight how much the first half of Too Late Now's disaffected internal monologue resembles the Sugarcubes and how many songs have the crunchy weight of grunge. With a tendency to zig when you expect them to zag, Wet Leg have plenty of places to go when the next album rolls around.

Already they can end with four gigantic songs that turn the Forum into a grinning, pogoing mass. The scorched-earth break-up song Ur Mum consists of nothing but hooks and provides the night's big set piece. When the music stops for the crowd to unleash their "longest and loudest scream", there's a full 30 seconds before it slams back in. It's cathartic, ecstatic and ridiculous.

Touring UK until Sunday



Eyewitness



▼Nevada, US
Marilyn Monroe on the set of her final film, The Misfits, in 1960, in one of 23 rare photos to be sold at auction
PHOTOGRAPH: OMEGA AUCTIONS/BNPS



Western Europe's heatwaves killed 20,000, analysis shows

Sandra Laville
Environment correspondent

More than 20,000 people died across western Europe in this summer's heatwaves, in temperatures that would have been virtually impossible without climate breakdown, figures show.

Analysis of excess deaths, the difference between the number of deaths that happened and those expected based on historical trends, reveals the threats posed by climate change-induced global heating, scientists said.

During the heatwaves temperatures exceeded 40C (104F) in London, areas in south-west France reached 42C and Seville and Córdoba in Spain set records of 44C. Analysis from the World Weather Attribution group of scientists found that such high temperatures would have been "virtually impossible" without the climate crisis. In England and Wales, 3,271 excess deaths were recorded between 1 June and 7 September, according to the Office for National Statistics – 6.2% higher than the five-year average.

The analysis does not estimate heat-related deaths specifically, but the number of deaths was higher on average for heat-period days than non-heat-period days. Covid deaths were excluded.

In France, there were 10,420 excess deaths reported during the summer months, according to data released by Santé Publique France, the government health agency.

One in four of these deaths, or 2,816, happened during one of the three intense heatwaves that hit the country. The excess deaths were 20% higher in regions where extreme temperature red alerts had been issued.

In Spain, the state-backed Carlos III Health Institute estimates there were 4,655 heat-attributable deaths between June and August. The Robert Koch Institute, the German government health agency, estimates 4,500 people died in the country during the summer months specifically as a result of extreme temperatures.

Dr Friederike Otto, a senior lecturer in climate science at the Grantham Institute, Imperial College London, said: "Heatwaves are one of the biggest threats posed by climate change. High temperatures are responsible for thousands of deaths across the world every year, many of which go underreported. Despite this overwhelming evidence, there is still little public awareness of the dangers that extreme temperatures present to human health."

3,271
The number of excess deaths recorded in England and Wales between 1 June and 7 September

44C
The record high temperature reached in Seville and Córdoba in Spain during summer's heatwaves

The summer of 2022 was the hottest on record, according to the EU's Copernicus climate change service.

Dr Eunice Lo, a research fellow in climate change and health at the University of Bristol, said: "Scientists have linked many past heatwaves to human-induced climate change. This means that observed heatwaves have been made more likely to occur or more intense because of human emissions of greenhouse gases."

Global heating is caused by the burning of fossil fuels, forest destruction and other human activities. The International Energy Agency advised last year that no new gas, oil or coal development could take place from this year onwards if the world was to limit global heating to 1.5C.

Lo said there was also a need for society to adapt to extreme heat. "This includes designing homes, schools and hospitals that have good ventilation and prevent overheating, increasing green space and parks in cities, and making heat warnings accessible to all."

Raab facing fresh bullying complaints from senior civil servants

Geneva Abdul

Dominic Raab is facing fresh complaints from senior civil servants in several government departments over allegations of bullying behaviour, according to reports.

The deputy prime minister's former private secretaries, responsible for handling the day-to-day affairs of government ministers, are preparing to submit formal complaints, according to BBC Newsnight.

The fresh complaints come a day after Rishi Sunak appointed a lawyer to investigate formal complaints into his deputy prime minister, whom civil servants have accused of bullying behaviour across several government departments.

"There are a series of allegations that appear to be coming across a number of departments where Dominic Raab has worked, each one is going to have to be approved by the prime minister for investigation," Dave Penman, the general secretary of the FDA union, said.

When asked by Newsnight if the coordinated effort by civil servants might look like a "witch-hunt", Penman said it demonstrated a level of concern about Raab's behaviour.

"This is an extraordinary set of circumstances," Penman said. "We've never come across a situation where so many civil servants appear to be raising complaints about a minister's conduct."

The Guardian previously revealed allegations of bullying across three government departments including the Ministry of Justice, the Brexit department and the Foreign Office.

Raab has previously denied any wrongdoing and expressed support for the review. Downing Street said Adam Tolley KC, who has been tasked with investigating the complaints, will be able to widen his investigation to look into other complaints if the prime minister agrees.

Newsnight also reported the alleged use of personal email accounts by Raab for government business in two departments, including as recently as his time as justice secretary last year. Officials had raised "deep concerns" about the use of his personal email account, according to the programme.

The new bullying complaints place renewed pressure on Sunak, who Penman said has to decide whether it is "safe" for civil servants to continue to work with Raab amid serious allegations about his conduct.

"That's what any employer would do," said Penman. "This is about the prime minister making a decision. He wants to retain veto in control through the ministerial code, with that comes the responsibility to protect civil servants."

Review

Flat, syrupy songs in an Elf with too much safety

Elf the Musical
Dominion theatre, London
★★☆☆☆

Chris Wiegand

Son of a nutcracker, what did they do to Elf? Back for a second stint in the West End, this musical version of the effervescent Will Ferrell film is an often flat night out. Despite some appealing performances and a tight candy-cane-twirling ensemble, it comes close to the blandly corporate Christmas experience it sets out to satirise and doesn't muster a lot more joy than the kind of department-store grotto in its story.

You know the plot: Buddy has been raised as an elf after crawling into Santa's sack as a baby. He heads to New York to track down his father, Walter, a hardboiled publisher of children's books, and brings disaster and cheer with him.

The tale is narrated not by Papa Elf (Bob Newhart's character in the movie) but by Santa himself, from a Dr Seuss-like perch. The eccentric spirit of that set design by Tim Goodchild is not matched by composer Matthew Sklar and lyricist Chad Beguelin's songs, mostly vanilla diversions and syrupy ballads, whose humour never matches the original screenplay. A brassy number sung by disgruntled Father Christmas impersonators and a snazzy finale choreographed by Liam Steel are notable exceptions.

Despite a tight ensemble, it comes close to the blandly corporate Christmas experience it sets out to satirise

There are some amusing moments, mostly taken straight from the movie. As Buddy, who loves warm hugs more than Frozen's Olaf, Simon Lipkin is funniest when trying to get Walter's attention. Lipkin's Buddy bonds well with his newfound brother (played at this performance by Logan Clark) and with Walter's wife, Emily (Rebecca Lock). But it never really seems like he is liberating their lives, and the show feels safe and reluctant to go off-kilter.

You also wish Philip Wm McKinley's production would make more of Georgina Castle's voice, though she has a good solo as the jaded Jovie who falls for Buddy.

In the movie, James Caan plays the father with a grimace and a death stare. When Walter arrives, a Eugene O'Neill gag declares "the Iceman cometh" but the far-too-twinkly Strictly winner Tom Chambers – who tap dances well – never dips below lukewarm.

With a hero devoted to bringing Christmas cheer by "singing loud for all to hear" this musical could have been a sweet festive treat but is altogether too stodgy.

Until 7 January



▲ *The songs in the stage version of Elf rarely live up to the humour of the original Will Ferrell film*
PHOTOGRAPH: MARK SENIOR

'Disgraceful'
Spanish right attack equalities minister
Page 34



Digging it
Students in Peru unearth lost mural
Page 36



▲ *Health workers in personal protective equipment carry Covid testing swabs on a street in Beijing*
PHOTOGRAPH: JADE GAO/AFP

Authorities lock down protest city in China's latest Covid restrictions

Verna Yu
Agencies

China yesterday imposed a fresh series of Covid lockdowns, including in a city where workers at the world's largest iPhone factory this week clashed with police, as a record daily high in Covid cases tested its commitment to follow the rest of the world into easing pandemic restrictions.

The National Health Commission said that the number of new local Covid cases rose by 31,444 on Wednesday - the highest daily figure since the coronavirus was first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019, and after almost three years of China's iron-fisted "dynamic zero Covid" policy.

The government tightened Covid restrictions in cities including Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou and ordered mass testing.

In Zhengzhou in the central province of Henan, where violent conflicts broke out on Tuesday and Wednesday between police and protesting workers at Foxconn's iPhone factory in a nearby industrial zone, authorities announced a five-day lockdown for approximately six million people, ordering residents to stay home and undertake daily PCR tests in a "war of annihilation" against the pandemic.

One worker told the AFP news agency the protests had begun with a pay dispute over promised bonuses at the Foxconn factory and "chaotic" living conditions. Foxconn, the Taiwan-based owner of the factory, which employs about 200,000 people at Zhengzhou, has been desperate to keep operations going after a handful of Covid cases forced it to lock down the facility. It recruited new workers from across the country on favourable packages to replace the thousands who last month walked away, but employees at the plant said protests started after the company changed the terms of their pay.

Videos online showed thousands of people in masks facing rows of police in white protective suits with plastic riot shields. Police kicked and hit one protester with clubs after he grabbed a metal pole that had been used to strike him.

Many employees accepted payoffs from the company and went home yesterday. Some took to social media to show they had received bonuses of 10,000 yuan (£1,152) in return for terminating their contracts.

Foxconn apologised yesterday for what it called "an input error in the computer system" and said it would guarantee that the pay is the same as agreed to and in official recruitment posters. "As for the violent incident, the company would continue to communicate with the staff and government to prevent similar incidents from happening again," a company statement said.

The strict enforcement of China's Covid policy for almost three years has not only had an impact on its economy but continued to stoke frustrations among the population. These manifest themselves in sporadic outbreaks of violence between residents and anti-Covid enforcement officers.

> *'All the stalls were full of people and prices have rocketed … no one was smiling'*
>
> **Zhengzhou resident**
> *Sina Weibo platform*

The latest lockdowns in China's protracted war against Covid came after the government announced on 11 November it would shorten quarantines and ease restrictions in a move seen as alleviating economic pressures and cooling discontent. But at the same time, officials warned cadres not to let down their guard in China's fight against the pandemic.

Elsewhere, Guangzhou imposed a five-day lockdown in the Baiyun district from Monday to curb a recent surge in Covid cases. Residents are required to stay home and public transport has been suspended, although areas that have not reported infections for three consecutive days could lift restrictions.

The government of the north-eastern city of Changchun in Jilin province has also urged its residents to halt non-essential movement and avoid going to public places, restaurants and public gatherings to combat the recent Covid flare-ups.

A Zhengzhou resident, who was among those scrambling to buy food in the market before the lockdown, said on the social media platform Sina Weibo: "All the stalls were full of people and the prices have rocketed … no one was smiling."

France opens investigation into role of consultants in election races

Angelique Chrisafis
Paris

France's financial prosecutor has opened an investigation into the role of consultancy groups, including McKinsey, in the 2017 and 2022 French election races, when Emmanuel Macron was elected as president and then won his second term.

The financial prosecutor's office confirmed that its current investigation into potential tax fraud by the US-based consultancy giant McKinsey had been widened to include consulting firms' possible involvement in the two election races.

Investigators are looking into allegations of "improperly keeping campaign accounts" and the "undervaluing of the role of consulting firms" as well as "favouritism".

The financial prosecutor did not name any politician or party as a target of the inquiry and did not confirm a report in the daily Le Parisien that the investigation focused on Macron's campaign.

Macron's office said it had taken note of the investigation, adding that prosecutors now needed to carry out their work "in all independence".

Macron swept to power promising to clean up politics in France. Presidents in France enjoy immunity while in office.

An investigation does not necessarily lead to a prosecution or imply guilt. It can take years before they are either shelved or go to trial.

The financial prosecutor said: "Following several reports and complaints from elected officials and individuals, a judicial investigation was opened on October 20, 2022."

Earlier this year, just as the centrist president was running for re-election, the French senate, which has a majority on the right, condemned what it called the "sprawling phenomenon" of dozens of private and international firms being hired to advise the government.

The opposition had accused Macron's government of spending too much on international consultancies that pay little or no tax in France.

The initial investigation into McKinsey was triggered after the French senate alleged in March that the firm used a system of "tax optimisation" through its Delaware-based parent company and was not paying sufficient corporate taxes in France.

McKinsey has consistently denied wrongdoing saying it "respects French tax rules that apply to it".

Additional reporting **Reuters**

Iranians advising Russia have been killed in Crimea, Ukraine confirms

Julian Borger
Kyiv

Ukraine's top security official has confirmed that Iranian military advisers have been killed in Crimea, warning that any other Iranians on occupied Ukrainian territory in support of Moscow's invasion will also be targeted.

Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's national security and defence council, said Iranians were in Crimea to help Russia pilot the Shahed-136 armed drones supplied by the Tehran government, but did not say how many Ukraine had killed.

Reports in the Israeli press in October said that 10 died as a result of Ukrainian military strikes in occupied Crimea. Danilov made it clear that any further Iranian military personnel would be targeted.

"You shouldn't be where you shouldn't be," Danilov said, in an interview in Kyiv. "They were on our territory. We didn't invite them here, and if they collaborate with terrorists and participate in the destruction of our nation we must kill them."

Since October, wave after wave of Russian air attacks, including drone and missile strikes, have targeted Ukraine's civilian energy infrastructure, plunging it into blackouts as the winter cold has begun.

Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, told a UN security council meeting late on Wednesday that the attacks were "an obvious crime against humanity" and said Kyiv would put forward a resolution condemning "energy terror".

The Kremlin spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, sought to blame Ukraine yesterday, saying it could "end all possible suffering of the civilian population" if it met "the demands of the Russian side".

After initially denying the presence of Iranian drones in Ukraine, the Tehran government claimed that it had supplied a "small number" to Russia months before Vladimir Putin launched an invasion of Ukraine in February. It denied sending Iranian trainers to help Russians fly the drones from occupied territory.



▲ *Oleksiy Danilov, Ukraine's top security official, warned Iranians*

Kyiv has expressed scepticism about Iran's version of events, and experts from both countries have met at Tehran's request to discuss evidence collected by Ukraine.

"The Iranians keep insisting that they are not suppliers of weapons to the Russian federation but we need confirmation," Danilov said.

"We understand these things don't fly without [people] learning how to operate them, and the Russians don't have the brains to figure it out themselves … In the modern world you can't hide anything. It is just a matter of time when it will be made public."

He said it was unclear whether Iran had also delivered ballistic missiles to Russia. "We are trying to answer this question and we'll do everything we can to make sure it doesn't happen," Danilov said. "But if it does happen, it will tell us two things.

"First, that Russia has no capability of manufacturing their own missiles, at least in the numbers for a large-scale war. Second, if a country that has been under sanctions since 1979 has a capability of producing such weapons, what kind of sanctions are we talking about?"

The papers on the conference table in Danilov's office were covered up with blank pages for security reasons, and sitting among them was a chess set with just a single black pawn advanced. Asked about it, Danilov said it was a metaphor for a world in which the old rules no longer applied.

"It shows that everybody is now starting with black," he said. "Or what is black could be white, or grey."

Ukraine's relations with Israel are an example of a grey area. There is a long list of Israeli military equipment the Kyiv government would like to acquire, but Israel has sought to avoid Moscow's retribution and tried to portray itself as neutral.

Benjamin Netanyahu's comeback in elections this month complicates the picture further as he has a warm relationship with Putin, but Iran's involvement on Russia's side will also affect Israel's calculations.

"The stand of Israel towards this war is well known and understandable," Danilov said. "Once again, you cannot hide anything, support or the absence of support."

Danilov was speaking after the liberation of Kherson city by Ukrainian armed forces, and rumours of raids across the Dnipro river to the southern part of Kherson region leading to Crimea. He was cagey about the state of the southern front, but pointed to previously reported operations behind Russian lines.

"Our armed forces are wherever they are required. We proved that more than once with our actions."





'We can get through it' Shelters offer water and power for citizens in Kyiv's blackout

◀ *A resident in Vyshhorod. Ukraine is setting up tents in neighbourhoods offering water and charging facilities*

PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF J MITCHELL/GETTY





◀ *Residents inspecting damage to their homes in Vyshhorod, on the outskirts of Kyiv, after a Russian missile strike yesterday*
PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF J MITCHELL/GETTY

▲ *A kitten retrieved from a building in Vyshhorod. Zelenskiy has called attacks on civilian areas 'a crime against humanity'*
PHOTOGRAPH: GLEB GARANICH/REUTERS

Julian Borger
Kyiv

The residents of Kyiv taking shelter in their local "invincibility station" were well aware that their own morale has become the central battlefield of the war, and it is not territory they are prepared to concede to Vladimir Putin.

The insulated grey tent set up on a street corner in the Pecherskyi district of Kyiv, one of thousands established around the country this week, was offering electricity, warmth, tea and sandwiches in the wake of the latest Russian onslaught.

"It's like 24 February, when the invasion started, and the beginning of March, when people really came together," said Maryna Honcharova, who was bundled up in a winter coat in the middle of the tent. If this was Putin's grand plan for grinding down the will of the people, she added, it had backfired.

"It just makes the anger towards Russia grow stronger. We just curse and hate Russia more."

There were murmurs of agreement from around the tent. Those who had been chatting in Russian earlier switched to Ukrainian to drive home the point.

A salvo of cruise missiles had knocked out the national power grid on Wednesday, and with it the water supply for much of the country. On satellite images, Ukraine stood out as a pitch black island. Kyiv was entirely dark on Wednesday night apart from a few public facilities and businesses with generators.

When yesterday dawned, 70% of the capital was still without power. The temperature outside hovered just above zero and a frigid rain fell, melting the snow of recent days and filling the streets with dark slush. There was water everywhere, but very little to drink. There was no power for the water pumping stations.

Oksana Yakovleva, a dentist, and her actor husband, Yurii, had made preparations for such an eventuality by filling up every container they had with water. They would have filled the bathtub if they had not been afraid that their three cats would fall in.

Meanwhile, life went on. Yurii's theatre was still putting on plays. "Nobody cancels. They come for the positive energy," he said.

Oksana pointed out her 87-year-old mother had returned to work, teaching in a music school, unbowed. "She remembers liberation on 9 May 1945," Yakovleva said.

Russia has used the iconography of the second world war to maintain Russian public support for the invasion. Ukrainians are quick to point out that ultimately victorious struggle is their legacy too, and they draw from it lessons in resilience.

"We are Ukrainians. We're strong and we can get through this," Angelina Anatolieva, a 50-year-old Pecherskyi resident, said. "Do you remember the siege of Leningrad? They lived through that and we can live through this. We can live through anything."

The repeated attacks, which Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, has called a crime against humanity, are having a cumulative impact on critical infrastructure. Farid Safarov, the deputy energy minister, said there had been a total blackout after the missile attacks on Wednesday afternoon.

"We had no synchronised single energy system. It was split into parts, so I may say it was 100% out of order," Safarov told the Guardian.

However, by 4pm yesterday, the national grid had been pieced back together again as a result of the intensive efforts of utility workers, rushing to restore power plants, high-voltage lines and transformers.

They did so under the constant threat of Russian "double tap" tactics, in which a second strike is targeted on damaged sites with the aim of killing humanitarian and repair workers.

"We have a couple of facilities that were struck at least eight times. The energy front is the second front of the war," Safarov said, describing the engineers risking their lives doing the repairs as "energy soldiers protecting the country."

To properly rebuild Ukraine's energy infrastructure would require a great deal of imported technology and outside funding, but it will be futile, Safarov pointed out, without adequate missile defences. "Let's imagine that we received all the equipment we need in one day and it took us one day to install that equipment, but then there is a new rocket attack," he said. The priority was to "create a shield in the sky in order to protect our energy infrastructure facilities".

At the centre of the Pecherskyi "invincibility station" was a small table covered with a spaghetti-pile of cables where local people were charging their phones and power packs. On one side there was a counter with water and snacks. The whole place was just 100 sq metres at most and was almost full even by early afternoon when power and water had been restored to most of the district. In what is likely to be a long and bitter winter, with the power grid under relentless Russian fire, Pecherskyi is going to need a much bigger tent, or many more of them.

Oleksandr Harchenko, a 32-year-old receptionist at the M15 barber's across the road from the "invincibility station", pointed out that the local response to the Russian attacks was not entirely one of stubborn resolve.

"I went to get water from the local well, and there were some people who were a bit panicky," Harchenko said. "We went 24 hours without water and electricity, and they restored it pretty fast. It could get a lot worse."

> ***'It's like when the invasion started, and the beginning of March, when people really came together. We just curse and hate Russia more'***
>
> **Maryna Honcharova**
> *Kyiv resident*

Moscow
MPs pass law criminalising all 'LGBT propaganda'

Pjotr Sauer

Russia's parliament has passed the third and final reading of a law banning "LGBT propaganda" among all adults, as Moscow ramps up its conservative political agenda at home.

The bill criminalises any act regarded as an attempt to promote what Russia calls "nontraditional sexual relations" - in film, online, in advertising or in public - and expands on a notorious 2013 law that banned disseminating "propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations" to minors and was used to detain gay rights activists.

Under the new law, people can be fined up to 400,000 roubles (£5,500) and organisations 5m roubles for "propagandising nontraditional sexual relations", while foreigners could face up to 15 days' arrest and expulsion from Russia.

Human rights groups and LGBTQ+ activists say the extension of the law means any act or public mention of same-sex relationships is in effect being outlawed. President Vladimir Putin is expected to sign the bill in the coming days.

Since the start of the war in Ukraine, which passed the nine-month mark yesterday, the Kremlin has promoted "traditional values", with Putin making anti-gay rhetoric one of the cornerstones of his agenda. In a recent speech, he accused the west of "moving towards open satanism", citing the promotion of gay and transgender rights in Europe as an example.

Alexander Khinshtein, a senior lawmaker and one of the bill's designers, said the war in Ukraine had given the proposed anti-LGBTQ+ law "new relevance". Referring to the conflict in Ukraine, he said: "The special military operation takes place not only on the battlefield but also in the minds and souls of people."

Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox church and a close ally of Putin, also backed the new law. In an earlier sermon, Kirill bizarrely blamed the country's invasion of Ukraine on gay pride parades.

Human rights activists condemned the bill yesterday. Igor Kochetkov, the head of the Russian LGBT Network, said it was an "absurd" government attempt to further discriminate against the LGBTQ+ community in Russia. Kochetkov, who recently left Russia, said the Kremlin was looking for internal enemies to distract attention from battlefield losses.

Human rights critics fear the law will be used to close down independent film and book festivals.

Recent polling has indicated parts of Russian society are becoming more tolerant. A 2019 poll showed that 68% of younger Russians viewed the LGBTQ+ community as "normal".

Journalist's health at risk as Somali bail terms ban travel

Jason Burke

Authorities in Somalia have imposed strict bail conditions on a respected journalist and media rights campaigner that will prevent him from seeking medical attention for a suspected kidney condition aggravated by poor conditions during his detention by police this year.

Abdalle Mumin, a co-founder of the Somali Journalists Syndicate and a contributor to the Guardian, was arrested in October after press organisations protested that directives issued by the information ministry on coverage of an offensive against Islamic militants in the unstable east African state put them at risk.

The 35-year-old, who divides his time between Kenya and Somalia, was held for three days in a notorious prison run by intelligence services, then transferred into police custody for a further 10 days, before being released on bail. Abdalle is now barred from working or leaving the country.

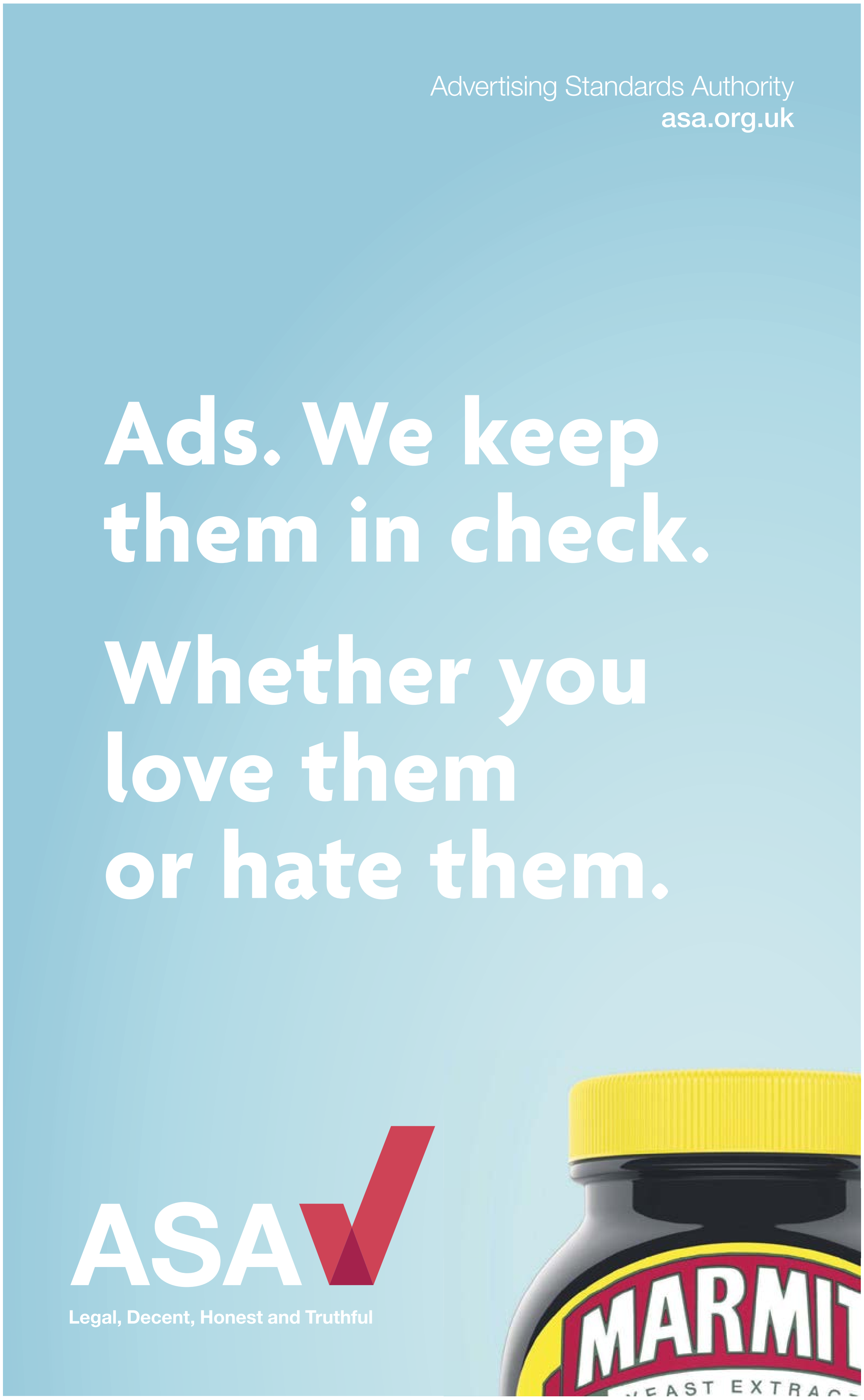
"We were just trying to stay neutral and do our jobs independently. I am facing serious threats to my life [from Islamic extremists] and from the government. I cannot leave the hotel where I am staying. But I am not allowed to return home [to Nairobi, Kenya] because they have taken my passport and put me on a list of banned people. I need medical attention and to see my family," he said.

Abdalle's arrest caused concern in the British government, a major aid donor to Somalia. "Freedom of expression underpins all human rights. We urge [the Somali government] to follow due process [and] for the case to be heard fairly," the UK embassy said at the time.

Human Rights Watch, a global campaign organisation, said the Somali government should end all harassment and arbitrary arrests of journalists by the intelligence and other security forces.

"The detention of Abdalle Mumin raises serious concerns about the new administration's commitment to media freedom," said Laetitia Bader, the group's Horn of Africa director.

"The Somali government needs to stop curtailing legitimate news coverage and free speech by making baseless national security claims."





PHOTOGRAPH: FERNANDO ALVARADO/EPA

▲ *Irene Montero criticised judges for not upholding the law on sexual consent*

Sexist attacks on Spanish minister over consent law

Sam Jones
Madrid

Rightwing and far-right Spanish politicians have used the controversy surrounding Spain's new "only yes means yes" consent law to launch bitterly sexist and personal attacks on Irene Montero, the Podemos MP and equality minister who championed the legislation.

The law, introduced by Spain's Socialist-led coalition government after the fury and revulsion that followed the so-called "wolfpack" gang-rape in Pamplona six years ago, made consent a significant factor in sexual assault cases.

But it also revised the scope of minimum and maximum prison sentences, inadvertently allowing some convicted sex offenders to have their sentence reduced on appeal.

Montero has defended the legislation, and angered many in the judiciary last week by suggesting that some judges had not been upholding the law because of their ingrained sexism.

Opposition parties have accused the government of bringing in a flawed and ill-considered law that does little to serve justice or the victims of sexual assaults. They have also stepped up their personal attacks on Montero, whose partner is Pablo Iglesias, the former Podemos leader and deputy prime minister.

On Tuesday, Carmen Herrarte, a city councillor for the centre-right Citizens party, accused the Spanish left of "devoting themselves to allowing rapists back on the streets" and said Montero "has got where she is because of being impregnated by an alpha male".

Edmundo Bal, Citizens' spokesperson, later distanced the party from Herrarte's remarks, calling them "absolutely disgraceful".

The next day, the far-right Vox party revisited the theme. One of the party's MPs, Carla Toscano, called Montero a "liberator of rapists" and lamented the minister's characterisation of judges. "You have to have quite a brass neck to insult professionals who have spent years of their lives studying law, when the only thing you've managed is a thorough study of Pablo Iglesias," she said.

Montero asked that the comments be included in the parliamentary record. "I want everyone to remember the political violence, and those who employ it, so that everyone can see that feminists and democrats outnumber them and that we will use more rights to put this gang of fascists in their place," she said.

Fellow politicians condemned the markedly sexist and personal nature of the attacks. Ione Belarra, the leader of Podemos, said Montero was "an example", while the Socialist prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, offered her his full support and described the scenes as "the worst of politics; a politics of insults and sexism".

> ***'We'll use more rights to put this gang of fascists in their place'***
>
> **Irene Montero**
> *Equality minister*

Pompeii's grassy ruins to be shorn by sheep

Angela Giuffrida
Rome

A flock of lawn-mowing sheep have been mobilised to trim unruly grass surrounding the ruins of Pompeii as part of an initiative that also includes plans to revive ancient vineyards.

The 150 sheep arrived in Pompeii yesterday and immediately got to work munching away in an unexcavated section of Regio V, a vast area to the north of the archaeological park.

In a nine-month experiment, the flock will also be deployed to trim other grassy areas as well as maintain ancient and new vineyards as park authorities seek to boost the production of Pompeii wine, which used to be exported across the Mediterranean.

"They entered the site with great enthusiasm and got to work straight away," said Gabriel Zuchtriegel, the director of the Pompeii archaeological park. "Maintenance is a huge cost, so instead of paying someone to cut the grass we have sheep eating it, fertilising it and creating a pastoral landscape that is much more resistant to dry seasons and heavy rainfall.

"Many people think of Pompeii as an ancient city with lots of houses, but it's actually much more than this," added Zuchtriegel. "There are huge areas of trees, grass, olive groves and vineyards. And if you look back at photos from 100 years ago in southern Italy, or even in the 1950s, it's astonishing to see the walls around Pompeii, Paestum and other sites - they didn't have these problems with growing vegetation because every square metre was productively used by these peasant communities."

Pompeii was destroyed by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD79. The city's ruins were discovered in the 16th century, with the first excavations beginning in 1748.

In the late 1800s, the archeologist Giuseppe Fiorelli first excavated some of Pompeii's vineyards, which had been beneath 3 metres of ash. Many were found in the less densely populated eastern side, where people produced wine in their gardens.


▲ *The sheep get to work at Pompeii* PHOTOGRAPH: POMPEII ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK

'Instead of mowing, the sheep eat the grass, fertilise it and create a pastoral landscape'
Gabriel Zuchtriegel
Pompeii director

Decoded letter from 1547 reveals plot to kill holy Roman emperor

Agence France-Presse
Nancy

Researchers have cracked a five-century-old code that reveals a rumoured French plot to kill the holy Roman emperor and king of Spain Charles V.

Charles was one of the most powerful men of the 16th century, presiding over a vast empire that took in much of western Europe and the Americas during a reign of more than 40 years.

It took the team from the Loria research lab in eastern France six months to decipher the letter, written in 1547 by the emperor to his ambassador in France. The tumultuous period saw a succession of wars and tensions between Spain and France, which was ruled at that time by Francis I, who brought Leonardo da Vinci from Italy.

The letter from Charles V to Jean de Saint-Mauris had languished forgotten for centuries in the collections of the Stanislas library in Nancy. Cécile Pierrot, a cryptographer from Loria, first heard of its existence at a dinner in 2019, and after much searching she was able to set eyes on it in 2021.

Bearing the signature of Charles V, it was at once mysterious and utterly incomprehensible, she told reporters on Wednesday.

In painstaking work backed by computers, Pierrot found "distinct families" of about 120 symbols. "Whole words are encrypted with a single symbol" and the emperor replaced vowels coming after consonants with marks, she said, possibly inspired by Arabic. In another obstacle, he used meaningless symbols to mislead any adversary trying to decipher the message.

The breakthrough came in June when Pierrot made out a phrase, and the team then cracked the code with the help of Camille Desenclos, a historian. Desenclos said the letter "confirms the somewhat degraded state" of relations between Francis I and Charles V, who had signed a peace treaty three years earlier.


▲ *The cryptographer Cécile Pierrot holds up the letter from Charles V*





Ancient mural rediscovered in Peru after more than a century

Dan Collyns
Lima

A team of student archaeologists has rediscovered a 1,000-year-old, multi-coloured mural depicting a deity surrounded by warriors that was last seen a century ago in northern Peru.

Known as the Huaca Pintada, the 30-metre-long (100ft) wall painted with fantastical images depicting mythical scenes was first found in 1916 by treasure-hunting tomb raiders in Illimo, near the city of Chiclayo.

The full splendour of the mural was captured in photographs taken at the time by Hans Heinrich Brüning, a German ethnographer whose work galvanised the study of pre-Columbian ruins and relics in the region.

But the grave robbers destroyed part of the wall after being forbidden from looting their find, and the site fell back into obscurity. More than a century passed until a Swiss-Peruvian team led by Sâm Ghavami from the University of Fribourg decided to take on the mystery and find the lost mural, which had disappeared from view under carob trees and undergrowth.



A section of the Huaca Pintada

> *'No one could see its monumentality when the mural was covered by trees'*
>
> **Sâm Ghavami**
> *Lead archaeologist*

"When we got access to the site, it was a huge relief," Ghavami, 33, told the Guardian by phone from northern Peru. One of the main challenges was accessing the site, which is located on private land, he said. It took two years to persuade the fiercely protective landowning family to allow them to excavate the site.

The Swiss archaeologist and 18 Peruvian students began excavations in 2019, thanks to a grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation.



Sâm Ghavami, left, and his team of archaeologists with the Huaca Pintada. Above, the excavation site
PHOTOGRAPHS: SÂM GHAVAMI

After a pause in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, they were able to continue in 2021 completing the dig this month.

"The first time we saw the huge wall, it was by just scratching the sand," said Ghavami. "We could see the walls were unexcavated."

In the final two months of the dig, the team rediscovered the murals that had been lost during Brüning's time, as well as new panels stretching 11 to 12 metres that had not been uncovered by the looters.

"It was a lot of work," said Ghavami. "No one could see its monumentality when it was covered by trees. When that was cleared away, people start to see it in a new way," he added.

Archaeologists believe the mural dates back to the Lambayeque culture of the 9th century AD. It was buried in a pyramidal mound in La Leche valley near another site called Túcume, in the Lambayeque region.

"It's the most exciting and important find of recent years," said Luis Jaime Castillo, an archaeology professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru.

"The depictions have a mixture of Moche and Lambayeque iconography," said Castillo. The Moche civilisation flourished in the region between AD100 and 700. "They show a transition, and maybe changes in the cosmologies.

"They give us a unique opportunity to contemplate the ancient societies of northern Peru, their deities and myths," he added.

For now, the site has been covered up to preserve it, but Ghavami – who is writing his doctoral thesis about the sociocultural changes that occurred in Lambayeque at the time when the mural was made – would like it to be restored to its former glory and eventually opened to the public.

Taylor Swift sale chaos triggers US Ticketmaster antitrust hearing

Sian Cain

A US Senate antitrust panel will go ahead with a hearing on the lack of competition in the country's ticketing industry after Ticketmaster's problems last week managing the sale of Taylor Swift tickets.

Ticketmaster's parent company, Live Nation, has blamed problems for Swift's Eras tour – the pop superstar's first US tour in five years – on "unprecedented demand" and an effort to keep out bots run by ticket scalpers.

After fans struggled for hours to get tickets in the presale, and tickets quickly began appearing for resale for as much as $22,700 (£19,100), Ticketmaster cancelled sales to the public.

The chaos attracted the attention of US politicians, many of whom have voiced concerns about how dominant Ticketmaster has become after it merged with the entertainment company Live Nation in 2010.

Tennessee's attorney general, Jonathan Skrmetti, has said he will launch a consumer protection investigation into the company.

On Tuesday, senators Amy Klobuchar, who will chair the panel, and Mike Lee announced the Senate hearing would go ahead.

Ticketmaster denied anticompetitive practices, citing its dominance because of the quality of its ticketing system compared with the next best.

Additional reporting **Reuters**



Taylor Swift's first US tour for five years drew 'unprecedented demand'



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Business

Energy subsidies could cost government £5bn a month

Alex Lawson
Energy correspondent

The cost to the government of shielding households from soaring energy bills is expected to double in the new year to up to £5bn a month, as ministers prepare to push the button on a public information campaign to reduce usage.

The rising costs come as the Treasury seeks to soften the blow of high bills, after the energy regulator, Ofgem, announced an increase to its price cap.

In response to the energy crisis, ministers are planning to launch a £25m advertising and social media campaign before Christmas to encourage people to save money and energy.

They have identified eight measures that could save households up to £420 a year, according to the Times. The measures to cut bills include reducing the temperature of boilers, which could save £80, turning off radiators in empty rooms, which could save £105, and switching off electrical devices rather than leaving them on standby, which could save £55.

Ofgem said yesterday its price cap would reach the equivalent of £4,279 a year for the average household from January. It said the cap, which is adjusted every quarter, would increase by an average of £730 for the three months from the start of next year. However, the government's energy price guarantee (EPG) limits the typical annual bill in Great Britain to £2,500 in the same period.

Although the importance of the Ofgem price cap for households is reduced by the EPG, it still matters because the cost of the Treasury subsidy on bills is linked to the difference between the two. The government provides energy suppliers with the difference between the unit rate under the EPG and what they would have charged their customers were it not in place – a rate set by the Ofgem cap.

The new cap will force the Treasury to pay 33p per unit of electricity and nearly 7p per unit of gas that households use. The energy consultancy Auxilione said this would push up the cost of running the EPG from £7.8bn in the last three months of 2022 to £15.1bn in the first three months of next year.

The energy supplier Ovo estimates the government will pay about 33p every time someone uses their oven for half an hour or an electric shower for six minutes.

The chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, said in last week's autumn statement that the EPG would be lifted to £3,000 for a typical household from April, which should reduce the amount the Treasury must pay in subsidy.

Average household bills were limited to £1,277 a year ago, under Ofgem's price cap. That had been due to rise to £3,549 from October.

However, the then prime minister, Liz Truss, intervened to introduce the EPG for two years. Hunt later truncated this to six months, then extended it by 12 months from April.

Truss had blocked a public information campaign on how to cut down on energy use, arguing it could be seen as "nannying" Britons. Michael Gove, the levelling up secretary, yesterday said the campaign would not be "nannying or patronising".

Other measures to cut bills that are expected to be part of the campaign include turning off the heating when going out, which could save £105 a year, and switching baths for showers, which could save £20.

The consultancy Cornwall Insight has predicted the EPG will cost the government £42bn in its entirety, representing about £2.3bn a month. Investec estimates the policy will cost £24bn, or an average of £4bn a month, for the first six months.

Forecasts of the cost are highly dependent on the wholesale price of gas, which has been volatile.



▶ *The government is preparing an information campaign on how to cut save energy as subsidy costs rise*
PHOTOGRAPH: MATTHEW HORWOOD/GETTY

Base rate can be cut if economy needs it, says Bank policymaker

Larry Elliott

Interest rates may need to start falling again if cost of living pressures abate more quickly than the Bank of England expects, a senior policymaker at Threadneedle Street has said.

Dave Ramsden, one of the Bank's deputy governors, said he was currently supporting fresh increases in the cost of borrowing but raised the possibility that a weakening economy may require a cut.

"Given the uncertainties we face, it is important also to be humble about what we don't know or still have to learn. I favour a watchful and responsive approach to setting policy," Ramsden said.

"Although my bias is towards further tightening, if the economy develops differently to my expectation and persistence in inflation stops being a concern, then I would consider the case for reducing the Bank rate, as appropriate."

Ramsden's comments came as the latest snapshot of manufacturing from the CBI predicted the UK's factories were facing a tough winter. The employers' lobby group said it expected a rise in output to be short-lived, since both domestic and export order books were below normal for the time of year.

Anna Leach, the CBI's deputy chief economist, said: "The rise in manufacturing output this month appears to be at least partly driven by improvements to supply chains, with several companies reporting they were able to fulfil orders as materials and components became more readily available.

"Total order books remained much weaker than earlier in the year, however, and output is expected to fall again in the quarter ahead."

Threadneedle Street's monetary policy committee (MPC) has raised interest rates steadily since last December from a record low of 0.1% to 3% and financial markets currently expect official borrowing costs to peak at 4.5%.

While Ramsden signalled that he would vote for rates to increase when the MPC meets again next month, he became the latest committee member to highlight risks that an overtightening of policy could lead to a deep recession.

At the committee's November meeting, only seven of the nine MPC members backed a 0.75-percentage-point increase, with Silvana Tenreyro and Swati Dhingra voting for smaller rises.

Signs that the US Federal Reserve plans to slow the pace of its interest rate increases next month weakened the dollar and pushed the pound to above $1.20 yesterday, its highest level in three months.

Demand for insulation and thermostats boosts profits at Kingfisher

Kalyeena Makortoff

The owner of B&Q, Kingfisher, has reported increased sales as fears over higher gas and electricity costs boosted demand for energy-efficient products including insulation rolls and smart thermostats.

The retail group, which also owns the hardware trade supplier Screwfix, said customers who had invested in energy-saving DIY products helped to boost group sales by 0.6% to £3.3bn in the three months to October. After stripping out the impact of the weaker pound, sales were up 1.7%.

"While the market backdrop remains challenging, DIY sales continue to be supported by new industry trends such as more working from home and a clear step-up in customer investment in energy saving and efficiency," said Thierry Garnier, Kingfisher's chief executive.

That included sales of loft insulation rolls at B&Q, which were up 108% compared with a year earlier, while demand for smart thermostats and kits from Screwfix rose 29%. Kingfisher added that sales of its thermostatic radiator valves – which are self-regulating and designed to maintain a constant temperature in a room – were up nearly 34%, and that sales of central heating controls had increased by nearly 21%.

Kingfisher's trading update comes a week after the chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, said in the autumn statement that the typical annual household energy bill would rise to £3,000 from April. The government's energy price guarantee has so far limited typical household bills to £2,500.

Kingfisher said it had launched an energy saving service in the UK and France to help customers identify which products and services would increase efficiency in their homes before winter. Garnier said there had been "very positive take-up" so far, with B&Q booking nearly 1,000 appointments within the first three days of launch.

The company said it was trying to remain competitive on pricing because of the cost of living crisis, and wanted its home improvement products to be "affordable and accessible", including the own-brand items that make up 45% of its sales.

108%
The increase in sales of B&Q loft insulation rolls this year. Central heating control sales were up 21%

Rising demand for rental homes pushes up prices

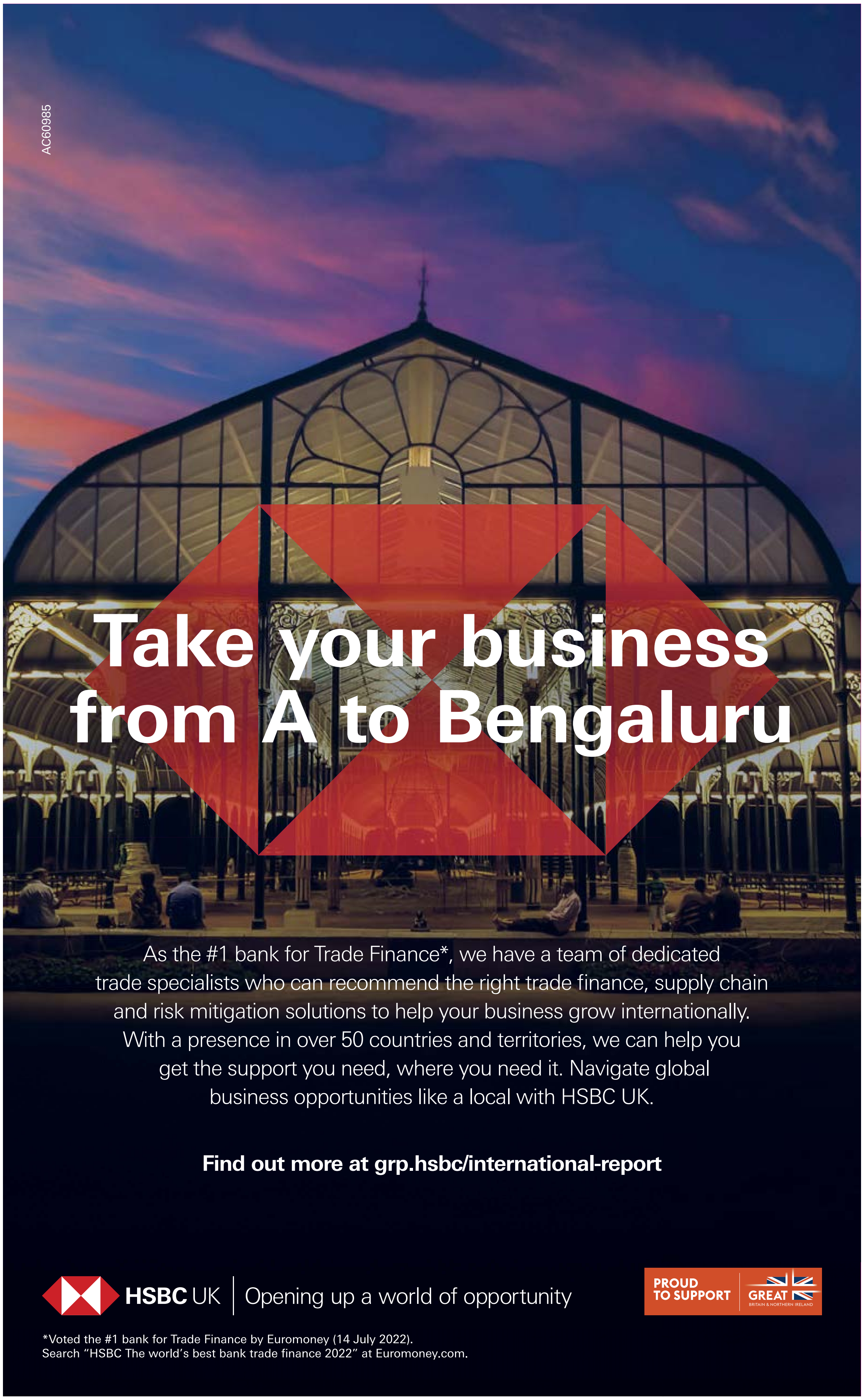
Julia Kollewe

Demand for rental homes across the UK has jumped by nearly a quarter in a year, research has found, piling more pressure on an oversubscribed market and pushing record private rents even higher.

The number of people inquiring about homes to rent is up 23% on this time last year, according to the Rightmove website, driven in part by some would-be buyers putting their plans on hold in the hope that mortgage rates will drop in the new year.

That has in turn fed a surge in how much landlords charge, with separate research from the London estate agent Foxtons reporting rents in the capital in the first nine months of this year had risen 22% year-on-year, with the average rent now at a record £571 a week. The cost and availability of mortgages has begun to settle since Kwasi Kwarteng's mini-budget spread mayhem, with indications rates could drop further next year.

The average two-year fix has fallen from a peak of 6.65% in late October to 6.12% now. Meanwhile the average five-year fixed rate this week dropped below 6% for the first time since the mini-budget, according to Moneyfacts, and is now 5.92%. Rightmove said rates would stabilise at a higher level than in recent years.



Business view
Nils Pratley



Dr Martens was overvalued at £3.7bn, so a stock market kicking is hardly surprising

Dr Martens stands for "rebellious self-expression", according to the blurb, so the company is in no position to complain if an independently minded stock market decides to stick the boot in. Investors' reaction to yesterday's half-year numbers was blunt. While the chief executive, Kenny Wilson, warbled about "another strong set of results" and the board raised the dividend to shareholders by 28%, the share price crashed by almost a fifth. It is now 40% below last year's float price.

To be fair to Dr Martens, in other circumstances one might call the plunge an overreaction. The numbers were strong-ish in the sense that revenues rose 13%; even a 6% fall in pre-tax profits to £57.9m could be explained in part by a combination of currency movements and a decision to keep investing in new stores, new IT and so on.

The issue, though, is that it is now obvious that Dr Martens was overpriced when it came to market with a £3.7bn valuation. A tale of years of easy growth – thanks to store openings and expansion in the US and Japan – looks more of a struggle in a colder inflationary climate. The classic 1460 boot already retails at £159, so there is surely a limit to how many price increases can be pushed through to match rising input costs. Operating profit margins are now expected to fall this year, even if the company is sticking to its medium-term target of 30%.

The backdrop is also key to the rapid rethink on value. Dr Martens was brought to market by the private equity firm Permira, which purchased the business for a mere £300m in 2014. Permira cashed out £1bn at float at 370p, trimmed again in January at 395p to the tune of £257m but is still sitting on a 36% stake. So what does it do with that large rump?

It is presumed to be a long-term seller but, with the shares now at 221p, sales at the new level would further sap other investors' confidence. This is a classic share overhang situation. The only short-term cure would be a storming set of trading numbers from Dr Martens at Christmas, which is probably not the way to bet.

A win for common sense

It won't make the top-10 list of this year's political U-turns, but let's not overlook Rishi Sunak's volte-face on Wednesday evening. In the world of financial regulation, it is a very big deal that the government has dropped its plan to allow ministers to override City regulators.

The so-called "intervention power" looked a dead cert to be added to the financial services and markets bill because Sunak himself, when chancellor, proposed the idea. It was part of how the UK would pursue those elusive "Brexit opportunities": if pedants at the Bank of England or the Financial Conduct Authority were getting in the way of UK competitiveness, the government would be able to prod them towards the preferred path.

But, no, Andrew Griffith, economic secretary to the Treasury, was wheeled out to say the plan had been dropped: "The government has decided not to proceed with the intervention power at this time."

Give thanks for the belated outbreak of common sense. The original plan was always wrong-headed and self-defeating. A right of veto for government on specific decisions would have created a charter for aggrieved and well-connected chief executives to trot round to Downing Street to grumble.

The two key arguments were made by Sam Woods, head of prudential regulation at the Bank, in a speech last month. First, the link between operational independence for regulators and financial stability is well established. Second, a power of intervention wouldn't actually boost competitiveness.

"My view is that through time it would do precisely the opposite, by undermining our international credibility and creating a system in which financial regulation blew much more with the political wind – weaker regulation under some governments, harsher regulation under others," said Woods. Absolutely right.

The Bank and the FCA may screw up from time to time, but there's nothing wrong with the overall design of the current set-up: parliament sets objectives and regulators have day-to-day operational independence. The possibility of political meddling in individual decisions would have injected uncertainty and confusion in the system.

The government's U-turn will inevitably provoke the usual cries from Tory backbenchers about "overmighty" regulators. Ignore them. It was important that the Bank and the FCA won this power struggle. A system of independent regulation has to be seen to be independent.

▼ *Workers move silicon wafers in the clean room of Nexperia's Newport semiconductor plant*
PHOTOGRAPHS: ADRIAN SHERRATT/THE GUARDIAN



'A real kick in the teeth'

Newport chip plant in limbo as Chinese firm is told to quit

Jasper Jolly

The clean room in Newport is the size of a football field, but in the industry they call it a ballroom. Workers in full bodysuits move silicon wafers from one end to another in a series of careful steps.

The 20cm slices of silicon are rigorously cleaned in chemical baths before light is used to draw precise patterns that are then etched out. It all takes place in an orange gloom to prevent light-sensitive chemicals from reacting.

After robots and people test for defects, the owner, Nexperia, ships thousands of wafers every week to its other plants in Asia to be cut into hundreds or even thousands of pieces. Those in turn will be shipped all over the world for use in circuit boards controlling the power flow in devices from hoovers to Jaguar Land Rover cars.

"A chip travels the world twice before it is used, not just for Nexperia but for any company," says Toni Versluijs, the Dutch company's UK manager.

Governments want to be part of the semiconductor industry. More than a trillion chips were used globally last year to control every kind of electronic device. Yet the Newport plant's international links have put it in the government's crosshairs. Nexperia is owned by China's Wingtech, which critics suggest could come under the influence of Beijing. Now ministers have ordered Nexperia to give up the Newport site 16 months after it took it over in July last year.

The company is outraged, having passed reviews by the business department and Boris Johnson's national security adviser. It has promised to do whatever it takes to overturn a decision it says will jeopardise 550 jobs and an £80m investment programme.

Its executives have gone further, telling the Guardian they had been considering a programme of investment to double or even triple production, with the option of building two new factories (known as fabs) in response to a global shortage of semiconductors.

Paul James, the Newport fab's managing director, says the plans - still at an early "concept" stage before the ruling - would be worth hundreds of millions of pounds in extra investment and could treble staff numbers at the site to 1,500.

"It was the next logical step," he says, suggesting the government decision is "political rather than based on facts".

Touting potential expansion is a last throw of the dice for Nexperia in seeking to persuade the government to change its mind, and some in the industry are sceptical that Nexperia would expand now the boom is forecast to bust. The company has three weeks to ask for a judicial review of the decision or divest the site.

Workers in the fab are not authorised to discuss the situation, but the staff association this week wrote to the business secretary, Grant Shapps, opposing the intervention and met his shadow, Jonathan Reynolds, in parliament on Wednesday. Shapps told parliament he was privy to information that he cannot share.

Mary Curtis, a programme manager who has worked at the fab for 35 years and sits on the association, said workers were shocked. "It's so unjust. It feels like a real kick in the teeth."

China critics have welcomed the government intervention, fearing strategic vulnerability to Beijing. In the US, Joe Biden has pushed through plans to invest \$52bn (£44bn) in the domestic chip industry, and the EU has said it will invest €43bn (£38bn) to address similar concerns.

Edward Stringer, a retired RAF air marshal who is now a fellow at the Policy Exchange thinktank, said: "Allowing China to control any vital link in these chains would not be sensible."

Ministers' public reasons for intervention centre on the potential for Newport to expand into making



◀ *The Nexperia facility in Newport, which ships thousands of silicon wafers each week to plants in Asia*

'It reminds me a bit of the thought police or Minority Report … if people are judged on what might happen, what could happen'



Toni Versluijs
Nexperia's UK manager

more complex chips known as compound semiconductors. In a statement that did not explicitly mention China, the government explained that if Nexperia became involved in making such items, or part of a cluster of local businesses working on the technology, its current ownership could pose a threat to national security.

The government appears to be backing an argument made by the former Newport Wafer Fab owner Drew Nelson, a former research scientist turned entrepreneur, that the factory should take a central place in Britain's attempts to build its semiconductor industry. Nelson bought the fab in 2017 in a management buyout backed by the Welsh government but lost control to Nexperia after financial difficulties.

His plan had been to develop the most striking part of the plant - a mass of blue and yellow pipes built in the 1980s in signature inside-out style by the late architect Richard Rogers - to produce wafers for other companies on an open access basis, rather than only supplying Nexperia factories. Nelson declined requests for an interview.

Ron Black, the chief executive of Codasip, which makes tools to design microprocessors, has also expressed interest in taking over the fab should the merger be reversed. He believes the government has made the correct decision, and a consortium he has assembled is still interested, though it is unsure of the process for any sale by Nexperia. Black has had discussions with Nelson.

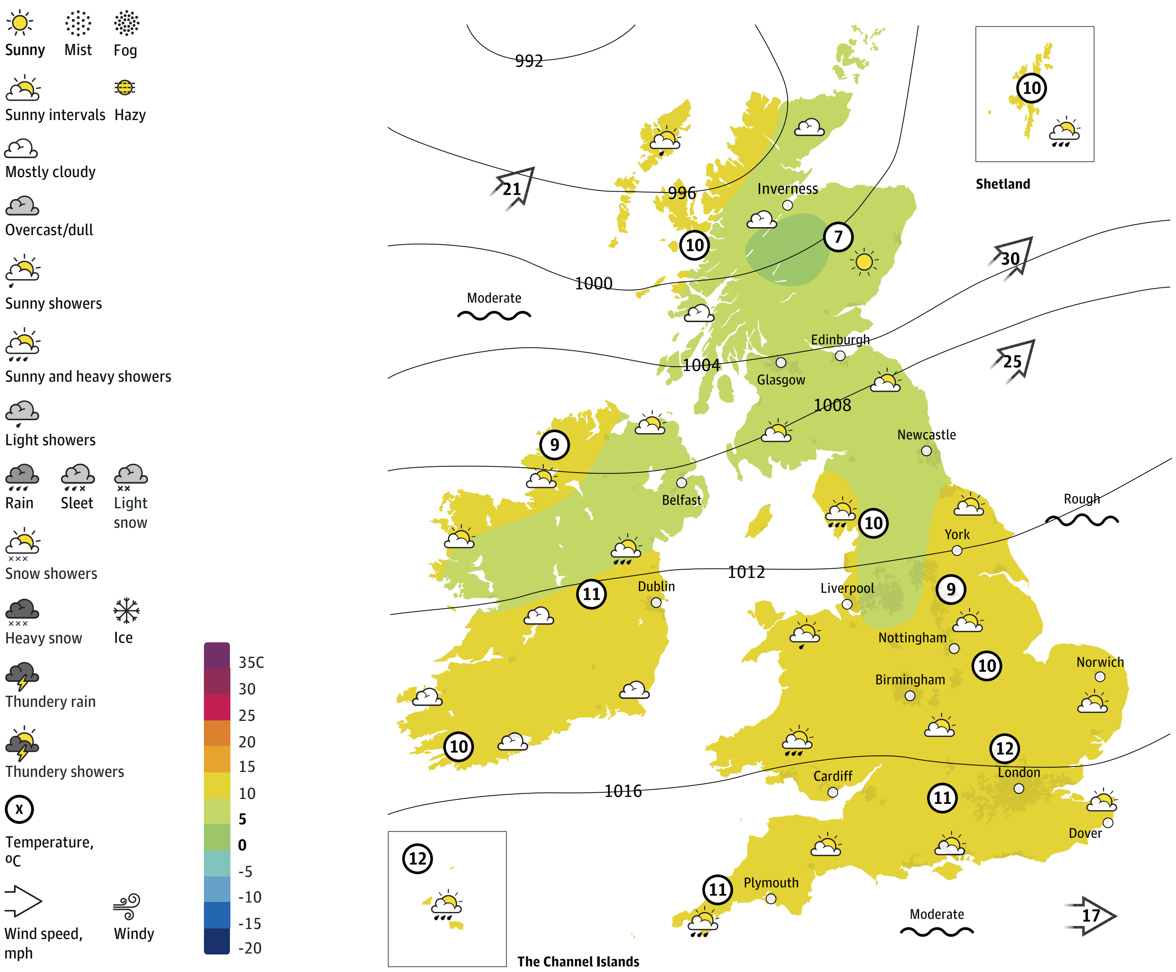
Versluijs is scathing about the government's claims of national security concerns over compound semiconductors, calling them "extremely far-fetched" and "weird". "It reminds me a bit of the thought police or Minority Report … if people are judged on what might happen, what could happen."

The fab's former owners have accused Nexperia of misleading MPs, saying the facility did in fact have the ability to make compound semiconductors before Nexperia's takeover. Versluijs hotly disputes this, and his company says there was only ever "some partial processing of a few wafers in a project where basic engineering support was provided but never any open access semiconductor capabilities".

"We believe it would hurt the cluster more than it would benefit it here" to reverse the takeover, Versluijs says. "We believe we are an asset, not a liability."

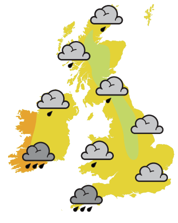
Weather
Friday 25 November 2022

UK and Ireland Noon today

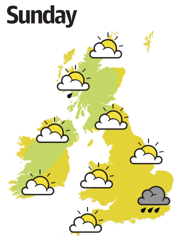


Forecast

Low 6 High 10
Tomorrow



Low 9 High 11
Sunday



Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

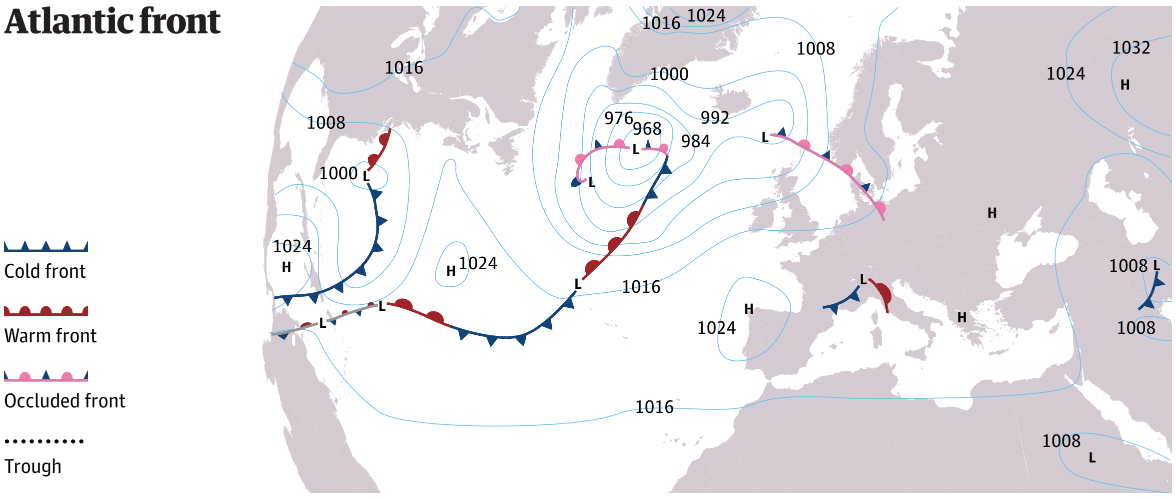
Latest	
21 Nov 2022	418.47
Weekly average	
13 Nov 2022	417.29
24 Nov 2021	414.80
24 Nov 2012	393.55
Pre-industrial base	*280*
Safe level	*350*

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

	Lows and highs		Precipitation	Air pollution
London	7	12	0%	Low
Manchester	6	9	5%	Low
Edinburgh	5	8	25%	Low
Belfast	6	9	15%	Low
Birmingham	6	10	5%	Low
Brighton	7	11	0%	Low
Bristol	6	10	40%	Low
Cardiff	7	11	85%	Low
Newcastle	6	9	5%	Low
Penzance	7	11	25%	Low

Atlantic front

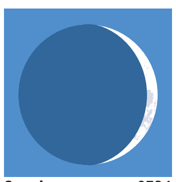


High tides

Source: © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Times are local UK times

Aberdeen	**0137**	4.5m	**1357**	4.4m
Avonmouth	**0747**	13.4m	**2010**	13.3m
Barrow	**--**	--	**1158**	9.6m
Belfast	**1129**	3.6m	**2359**	3.7m
Cobh	**0554**	4.2m	**1814**	4.2m
Cromer	**0650**	5.2m	**1913**	5.1m
Dover	**1123**	6.9m	**2346**	6.8m
Dublin	**--**	--	**1159**	4.2m
Galway	**0533**	5.3m	**1800**	5.2m
Greenock	**0037**	3.6m	**1306**	3.6m
Harwich	**--**	--	**1216**	4.1m
Holyhead	**1048**	5.8m	**2311**	5.8m
Hull	**0642**	7.7m	**1903**	7.7m
Leith	**0256**	5.7m	**1515**	5.7m
Liverpool	**1137**	9.5m	**2359**	9.4m
London Bridge	**0211**	6.9m	**1430**	7.3m
Lossiemouth	**0009**	4.3m	**1231**	4.2m
Milford Haven	**0642**	7.2m	**1903**	7.2m
Newquay	**0532**	7.2m	**1753**	7.2m
North Shields	**0341**	5.3m	**1603**	5.2m
Oban	**0606**	4.1m	**1823**	4.1m
Penzance	**0504**	5.7m	**1725**	5.6m
Plymouth	**0621**	5.6m	**1844**	5.5m
Portsmouth	**--**	--	**1152**	4.9m
Southport	**1112**	9.2m	**2334**	9.1m
Stornoway	**0715**	5.1m	**1935**	4.9m
Weymouth	**0729**	1.5m	**1954**	1.4m
Whitby	**0419**	5.7m	**1641**	5.7m
Wick	**--**	--	**1154**	3.7m
Workington	**--**	--	**1159**	8.6m

Sun & Moon



Sun rises	0734
Sun sets	1559
Moon rises	0947
Moon sets	1647
First Quarter	30 Nov

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2022

Lighting up

Belfast	1609 to 0815
Birm'ham	1602 to 0747
Brighton	1603 to 0733
Bristol	1611 to 0746
Carlisle	1554 to 0803
Cork	1632 to 0811
Dublin	1616 to 0810
Glasgow	1556 to 0815
Harlech	1610 to 0758
Inverness	1544 to 0823
London	1559 to 0736
M'chester	1600 to 0753
Newcastle	1549 to 0759
Norwich	1549 to 0736
Penzance	1627 to 0752

Weatherwatch

One of the joys of walking in the countryside is seeing a big cloud in the middle distance with what appears to be burst of rain falling on someone else's head while you remain in the sunshine, or at least dry. These wispy curtains, that look like waterfalls, are known as virga clouds and are particularly noticeable and attractive if caught by the evening sun.

But the impression that the rain from them is reaching the ground is an illusion. The rain, or often ice, that you are seeing is falling but as it hits warmer air below it evaporates (or sublimes). Sublime is the word chemists use to describe the reaction when a solid substance turns to vapour as it is heated.

Cloud watchers often refer to virga as jellyfish clouds because they have a similar appearance to a jellyfish floating in the sea, with its translucent tentacles hanging from its more substantial body.

So while no one on the ground gets wet as a result of this phenomenon, there is a danger to aircraft from within these clouds. If an aircraft passes through at the point where the rain turns to vapour, the plane can unexpectedly hit a column of air accelerating downwards as it cools, causing severe air turbulence. **Paul Brown**

Around the world

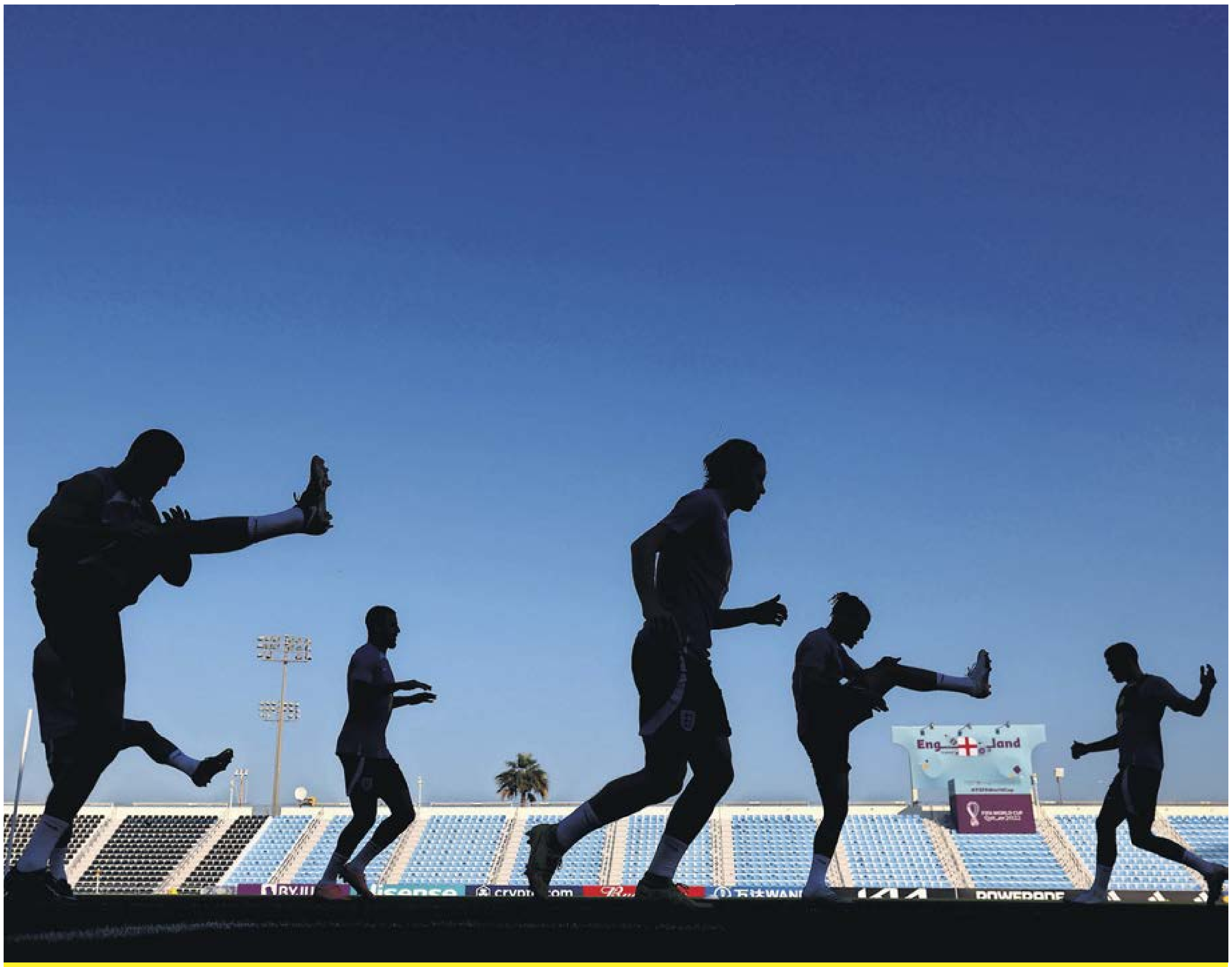
Algiers	21	Lisbon	17
Ams'dam	10	Madrid	14
Athens	17	Malaga	24
Auckland	18	Melb'rne	21
B Aires	27	Mexico C	18
Bangkok	31	Miami	30
Barcelona	17	Milan	12
Basra	27	Mombasa	30
Beijing	13	Moscow	-5
Berlin	7	Mumbai	33
Bermuda	21	N Orleans	22
Brussels	10	Nairobi	26
Budapest	8	New Delhi	30
C'hagen	7	New York	11
Cairo	23	Oslo	1
Cape Town	21	Paris	11
Chicago	10	Perth	23
Corfu	18	Prague	6
Dakar	29	Reykjavik	7
Dhaka	33	Rio de J	26
Dublin	10	Rome	15
Florence	15	Shanghai	18
Gibraltar	21	Singapore	30
H Kong	26	Stockh'm	1
Harare	28	Strasb'g	11
Helsinki	-3	Sydney	23
Istanbul	12	Tel Aviv	20
Jo'burg	25	Tenerife	26
K Lumpur	31	Tokyo	16
K'mandu	31	Toronto	6
Kabul	21	Vancouv'r	9
Kingston	30	Vienna	7
Kolkata	28	Warsaw	0
L Angeles	25	Wash'ton	13
Lagos	31	Well'ton	17
Lima	22	Zurich	7

Rugby union
Jones beefs up pack for clash with world champions
Page 42 →

World Cup
Why England goalkeepers should fear USA
Page 50 →



Sport



World Cup 2022

▲ *England players will look to implement lessons from the Iran game and from training when they play the USA tonight*
EDDIE KEOGH/THE FA/GETTY

Finishing touch
England's bench offers vital edge with Foden ready to exploit USA gaps



Karen Carney

In the 71st minute of England's victory over Iran, Gareth Southgate brought on Phil Foden, Marcus Rashford and Jack Grealish. They are not traditional substitutes, they are the manager's finishers - the players brought on to lift the tempo and see the match out. They made a difference and could do once more against the USA tonight.

Gregg Berhalter's side struggled to hold Wales in the second half because their stamina levels were depleted and a tired challenge from Walker Zimmerman on Gareth Bale resulted in a late penalty. If the USA run out of steam in the same manner, they could face an even tougher final quarter against the freshness of England's bench.

The starters are there to deliver the gameplan and the replacements come on to increase the tempo by 15-20% and get the job done - and Southgate has plenty of options. The role of finishers is critical in the modern game, maximising everything available to a head coach. They bring intensity and in England's case plenty of goals. Not many countries can call upon someone of Foden's level off the bench and it is a great strength for England.

If Southgate had been offered a 6-2 win over Iran he would have accepted it. I know I would have. There were plenty of positives but he was concerned by conceding two goals because tournament football is about clean sheets and he will be telling his players not to switch off in the same way tonight. They were the two blemishes on an impressive performance that laid down a marker in dominant fashion.

Southgate selected an experienced side and that shone through. It is unlikely he will make too many changes, fitness permitting. I would have picked Foden over Bukayo Saka but Southgate justified his selection. The team counterpressed well, winning the ball back quickly. That said, I could see a case for Foden starting against USA. He is a technician who can take a number of touches in tight spaces and against the intensity of the USA press that could be useful to find the gaps they may leave in behind.

It was great to witness Jude Bellingham liberated in the centre of the pitch. He was allowed to express himself, get forward and be who he wanted to be. As England progress, Bellingham's role may become more defensive but he certainly made the most of being allowed to be proactive against Iran and it could do the same to the USA.

Everyone knew how Carlos Queiroz's side would play against England: they set out to be compact and hard to beat. England needed to earn the right to break them down and it took until the 35th minute for Bellingham to head the opener.

You could see the plan: Bellingham would punch a pass through the lines to put England on the front foot; Raheem Sterling, Saka and Mason Mount all got into good pockets of spaces; and Kieran Trippier and Luke Shaw offered width.

At this level it is not enough to dominate possession in the final third. It is necessary to work teams by moving them from left to right and create spaces. Then, as the game goes on, it is possible to stretch them the other way.

When the game is stretched, England have plenty of options to utilise space in behind. The USA lack pace at centre-back, something Wales tried to target, albeit unsuccessfully. I understand why Rob Page went with Bale and Daniel James up front because Tim Ream and Zimmerman are not the quickest but the ball rarely made it to them in the first half because of the USA's press. There is certainly no lack of pace in the England squad and they will be aiming to use that to threaten.

The USA looked susceptible on set pieces against Wales; Kieffer Moore should have scored from a corner and Matt Turner was troubled from corners. Against Iran, set pieces were a strength of England's. Harry Maguire should have been awarded a penalty early after being wrestled to the ground and softer spot-kicks have been awarded since. This is one of the reasons I selected him in my team for the opener. A lot of people questioned the decision to pick him but my reasoning is that 30% of goals come from set pieces - it is a massive weapon.

> *Foden is a technician who can take a number of touches in tight spaces - against the USA press that could be useful*

When Manchester United signed Maguire it was because his aerial duels were really good. He's always been a threat in attack and he is incredibly important in defending set pieces. England look a threat and a physical team in the penalty area, so it is something they should capitalise on.

People should not underestimate how difficult the first game of a major tournament is. One of the favourites, Argentina, lost to Saudi Arabia. There was pressure on them because of the high expectations back home but they could not get the job done against inferior opposition. England deserve plenty of credit for what they did on Monday against a side who wanted to make things incredibly difficult. Now they need to back it up because momentum is key.

Heartbreak haunts Vunipola on his Springboks reunion

England prop is preparing to face South Africa for the first time since the painful 2019 World Cup final defeat

Robert Kitson

Three years have now passed but Mako Vunipola's memories of the 2019 Rugby World Cup final remain horribly clear. Things did not end well for England on the last occasion he faced a South Africa pack and the Saracens loosehead is seeking a more positive experience when he encounters the Springbok forwards again at Twickenham tomorrow.

Even the mere sight of a green jersey gives Vunipola vivid flashbacks to Yokohama, where the Springbok scrum suffocated England's world title ambitions at source. "That game will probably stay with me for the rest of my life, not only because of how we lost but because of how they imposed themselves on us," acknowledged the 31-year-old, one of four starting changes to the home side in the wake of the 25-25 draw with New Zealand.

The Boks, to quote Eddie Jones, "will be coming through the front door" this time as well, hence the strategic recalls for the experienced Vunipola and his club-mate Jamie George in the front row and the addition of a third lineout option in Northampton's Alex Coles at blindside flanker. Another Saint, Tommy Freeman, is back on the wing to help England defuse the wider aerial threats presented by the world champions.

It is up front, though, where South Africa's "Bomb Squad" most enjoy flexing their muscles and Vunipola is in no hurry to revisit the sense of post-match deflation England endured in Japan. "Sitting in the changing room afterwards was tough. If we'd played our best and they'd still beaten us, I could live with that. But the fact we didn't fire a shot … that is probably the toughest thing to reflect on.

"Afterwards you watch it back and review it but it's too late by then. You have to have the ability to adapt on the field. On that day we didn't."

South Africa will be without one or two familiar faces, with this weekend's Test taking place outside the official November Test window, but the presence of, among others, Eben Etzebeth will still guarantee another heavy-duty encounter. "He's very physical, confrontational and tough and he'll keep coming all day," Vunipola said. "We have to be ready for that. As a pack there are numerous players that can set the tone for them. It's a great challenge. You can either walk towards them or shy away and probably never play international rugby again."

> *'That game will stay with me for the rest of my life because of how they imposed themselves on us'*



▲ *Mako Vunipola trains ahead of England's match against South Africa*
ACTION IMAGES/REUTERS

In addition to the late confidence engendered by their dramatic three-try finish against the All Blacks, however, England believe their own forward talisman Maro Itoje is ready to give a performance that will cause even Etzebeth to stop and think.

"I think we are seeing the second coming of Maro," suggested Jones, the head coach. "He came out like a comet but like all good players there is a period where you stabilise. Now he is going up again – we will see the best of Maro on Saturday.

"At his best he is the best defensive player in the world and we want to see more of that. There was a certain American basketballer, Kobe Bryant, whose focus was on being the best defensive player. Maro has that in him."

Vunipola, who has played alongside Itoje for years, also feels his teammate is still improving. "There are times where maybe he's over thought things and tried to solve everything by himself but that's just the growing pains of a young player. He's now a massive leader for us … he's the one who leads the physicality in the forwards."

With Ellis Genge, Sam Simmonds, Luke Cowan-Dickie and Jack Nowell all poised to come off the bench, there is clear potential for England to finish strongly again if they can stand firm early on. Jack van Poortvliet has rightly been backed at scrum-half despite a difficult game against the All Blacks while Manu Tuilagi is set to win his 50th cap. "We've selected a different side to neutralise their strengths and play to our strengths," Jones said. "We're going to have to fight and fight and fight and, when we get a chance to break them, we're going to have to take it. I've never seen a Springbok team not turn up. That's just part of the game."

Jones teases Erasmus over officials criticism

Gerard Meagher

Eddie Jones has insisted referees must be treated with respect after joking that Rassie Erasmus may take a leaf out of José Mourinho's book and sidestep his match-day ban tomorrow by hiding in a laundry basket.

Jones also wondered whether Erasmus's outbursts and the siege mentality South Africa have fostered have been designed to motivate the world champions.

Erasmus, South Africa's director of rugby, implicitly criticised the English referee Wayne Barnes when posting a series of clips from the narrow defeat by France this month, alongside a number of sarcastic comments. Barnes has received death threats and his family have also been targeted, leading to the Rugby Football Union sending a strongly worded letter to its South African counterpart.

World Rugby tightened its regulations after banning Erasmus for 12 months for a similar outburst during the 2021 Lions tour and last week moved quickly to ban him again from match-day activities against Italy last weekend and England tomorrow.

But in an apparent reference to how Mourinho, while serving a ban, snuck into Chelsea's dressing room to give a team-talk in 2005 before being smuggled out by the kit man, Jones said: "He might come in a laundry box. That's been done before hasn't it? I'm sure he will get in there somehow. The only thing I'd say is that we have to respect the referees and look after the referees. They're an important part of our game."

Asked if Erasmus's behaviour is intentionally contributing to South Africa's siege mentality, Jones added: "Whenever you've won something, you need to find the motivation to do it again and maybe it is a clever way to find motivation."

Jones recalled how he was fined A$10,000 dollars (£5,580) for comments made about a referee while coaching Queensland Reds in 2007, saying he paid it out of his own pocket – a lesson on the need to bite his tongue. He has not always done so as England head coach and was reprimanded by the Rugby Football Union for comments made about Ben O'Keeffe after a Six Nations win over Wales in 2020.

As revealed by the Guardian in September, the RFU is seeking to clampdown on the abuse of match officials at all levels amid a concerning rise in the number of incidents and Jones added: "Since [1998] I have accepted the fact we shouldn't speak about referees. To me it's simple. Play the game, the referee's in charge; if he makes mistakes, let's accept it.

"I've said things that probably haven't been right but the longer I've coached the more I accept we've got to look after the referees."

Jones has made four changes to his side for tomorrow's match, with the vice-captains Ellis Genge and Jack Nowell dropping to the bench and Mako Vunipola and Tommy Freeman starting in their place. Jamie George and Alex Coles also come into a beefed-up pack.

England
South Africa

Tomorrow 5.30pm

England		South Africa
F Steward Leicester	15	**W le Roux** Verblitz
T Freeman N'hampton	14	**K-L Arendse** Bulls
M Tuilagi Sale	13	**J Kriel** Eagles
O Farrell Saracens (c)	12	**D de Allende** Wild Knights
J May Gloucester	11	**M Mapimpi** Sharks
M Smith Harlequins	10	**D Willemse** Stormers
J v Poortvliet Leicester	9	**F de Klerk** Eagles
M Vunipola Saracens	1	**O Nché** Sharks
J George Saracens	2	**B Mbonambi** Sharks
K Sinckler Bristol	3	**F Malherbe** Stormers
M Itoje Saracens	4	**E Etzebeth** Sharks
J Hill Sale	5	**M Orie** Stormers
A Coles N'hampton	6	**S Kolisi** Sharks (c)
T Curry Sale	7	**F Mostert** Heat
B Vunipola Saracens	8	**E Roos** Stormers

Replacements	Replacements
L Cowan-Dickie Exeter	**M Marx** Spears
E Genge Bristol	**S Kitshoff** Stormers
W Stuart Bath	**T du Toit** Sharks
D Ribbans N'hampton	**M van Staden** Bulls
S Simmonds Exeter	**K Smith** Blue Revs
B Youngs Leicester	**J Hendrikse** Sharks
H Slade Exeter	**M Libbok** Stormers
J Nowell Exeter	**C Moodie** Bulls

Venue Twickenham
Referee Angus Gardner (Aus)
12°

TV Prime Video **Radio** TalkSport 2

RFU under fire from MPs over Worcester and Wasps' demise

Michael Aylwin

The Rugby Football Union was accused of "failure on an epic scale" as the recent collapses of Worcester and Wasps were subjected to parliamentary scrutiny yesterday. Julian Knight, chair of the digital, culture, media and sport select committee, put it to Bill Sweeney, the governing body's chief executive, that he should consider his future.

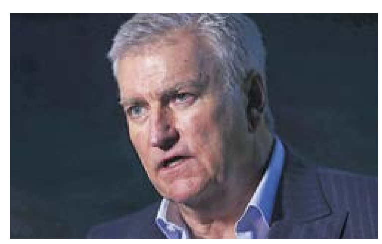
"If you look behind you," Knight told Sweeney, who sat alongside representatives from Premier Rugby and the Rugby Players Association at the hearing, "you will see people from Worcester, and they're furious at your failings. You have failed in this instance and so has the RFU. Should you not be looking at your own position?"

Knight also said he would be referring the matter of Colin Goldring's ownership of Worcester and Morecambe Football Club to the serious fraud office and John Campion, the police and crime commissioner for West Mercia. He told the hearing that Goldring is said to have falsified a claim to being a solicitor when he initially passed the English Football League's directors test at a time when he was facing an investigation into his mishandling of €8m (£6.8m) of a client's money. Goldring was subsequently disqualified by the Solicitors' Regulation Authority.

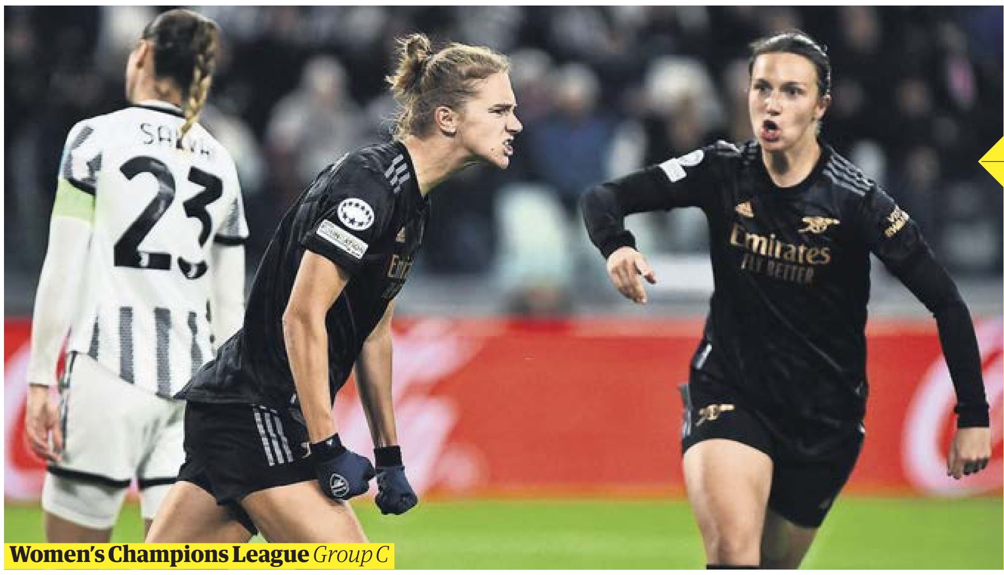
The implementation of a continuing fit-and-proper-persons test "seems fairly obvious", Knight said, "when you have this sort of situation … We've seen these issues in other sports. Did it not occur to you to do this?"

Sweeney replied with a timeline of events, in which the imperative to save the club overtook questions about the owners. "They assured us that new financial measures were being explored," said Sweeney of a meeting in July. "We also share the frustration and somewhat anger that there were numerous missed deadlines, missed promises and guarantees."

Simon Massie-Taylor, the chief executive of Premier Rugby, quietly mentioned at one point the part played by the department for digital, culture, media and sport, which loaned those same (in Sweeney's words) "reprehensible characters" more than £15m of taxpayers' money during the pandemic.



▲ *Bill Sweeney said he 'shared the frustration' over Worcester's failure*



Women's Champions League *Group C*

Gunners head for a draw in Turin

Arsenal's Vivianne Miedema celebrates her crucial equaliser in the second half against Juventus
MASSIMO PINCA/REUTERS

Miedema strikes on her return to save Arsenal

Juventus 1
Beerensteyn 52

Arsenal 1
Miedema 61

Sophie Downey
Juventus Stadium

A well-balanced encounter ended with Arsenal being held by their Italian hosts. The influential Lineth Beerensteyn had put Juventus ahead in the second half before Vivianne Miedema hit back to ensure her side returned home with a valuable point.

Jonas Eidevall was satisfied after his Arsenal side came from behind to maintain their unbeaten European record this season. "I think we could have won given the chances that we created," the manager said. "But I am happy with the performance. I think we came from a tough game against Manchester United, we have a tough situation with the squad and injuries. I am extremely proud of the players – the way that we can come here and get back to our way of playing against a very tough team."

As soon as these two sides were drawn together in October, there was an extra weight added to this fixture. Fondly dubbed the "Joe Montemurro derby" by fans, this was the first time the former Arsenal manager had come up against his old side. After spending almost four years at the helm in north London, the Australian departed for a new challenge in 2021, having previously led the Gunners to a first WSL title in seven years.

Football, as always, moves on, and Montemurro and Eidevall are building with their new clubs. Arsenal have impressed in this Champions League campaign but arrived in Turin after falling to their first loss of the season and with their injury worries mounting. Beth Mead was the latest to be added to the list, having suffered a significant ACL injury at the weekend. Her absence brought Miedema into the starting line up in her now customary role behind Stina Blackstenius.

Juventus, meanwhile, went into the game two points behind their opponents in Group C and knowing that a victory would massively bolster their chances of progression. However, things are not going entirely the Italian champions' way this season – they are second in Serie A behind high-flying Roma.

Arsenal enjoyed a bright start with the expansive pitch affording the midfield plenty of space to break through the lines. Blackstenius was the beneficiary, running on to multiple through balls. She clipped the top of the woodwork with one effort before firing straight at Pauline Peyraud-Magnin.

Juventus offered their own threat with the pace of Beerensteyn causing problems. The hosts should have gone in ahead at the break when Arianna Caruso found herself unmarked in the box but she directed her header agonisingly wide.

The temperature may have dropped as the teams re-emerged after the break but Juventus were determined to turn up the heat. They bided their time, remaining compact in the face of Arsenal possession before taking the lead. The electric Beerensteyn had provided the backline with enough warnings and finally made them pay when she broke on to Cristiana Girelli's defence-splitting pass and fired clinically past Manuela Zinsberger.

Juventus had the wind in their sails but Eidevall's Arsenal can never be discounted. They have shown plenty of grit this season and they battled hard to draw level. Miedema, always one for the big occasions, rose highest in the box to meet a pinpoint Frida Maanum corner. Towering over Julia Grosso, she glanced a header home.

The final quarter, however, was a bitty encounter with niggling fouls disrupting the flow. Neither goalkeeper was really troubled as the game drew to a close. The Gunners will travel home perhaps the happier side: a draw away from home is no mean feat and they maintain their cushion at the top of the group.

Eidevall was impressed with the resilience his side displayed. "It gives me [a lot of pride]," he said. "It should give all our supporters pride as well. It's one of the fundamentals we have – that no matter the result or the situation, we have an obligation to always play 100% and always compete."

Arsenal will host the same opposition in a fortnight at the Emirates, a stage that they will feel gives them the advantage as they look to secure progression to the next round.

Juventus
4-3-3
Peyraud-Magnin; Lenzini, Rosucci, Salvai, Boattin; Caruso (Bonfantini 82), Pedersen, Grosso; Bonansea (Cantore 82), Girelli, Beerensteyn (Duljan 90)

Arsenal
4-3-3
Zinsberger; Wienroither (Maritz 80), Wubben-Moy, Catley, McCabe; Maanum, Wälti, Nobbs (Beattie 65); Blackstenius, Miedema, Foord

Referee Iuliana Demetrescu (Rom)

Saudi minister: 'We would back private bids for United'

Jamie Jackson

Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Faisal, Saudi Arabia's sports minister, has said his government would definitely support any private sector bids from the country for Manchester United or Liverpool.

While the Saudi Public Investment Fund backed the purchase of Newcastle United last winter, Prince Abdulaziz said private businesses in his country have a strong interest in English football's most successful clubs, with both instructing banks regarding potential investment or sale.

"From the private sector I can't speak on their behalf but there is a lot of interest and appetite and passion about football," he told BBC Sport. "It's the most-watched league in Saudi and the region and you have a lot of fans of the Premier League. We will definitely support it if any [Saudi] private sector comes in because we know that's going to reflect positively on sports within the kingdom. If there's an investor willing to do so and the numbers add up, why not?"

The prince also stated a wish to see Cristiano Ronaldo play in Saudi. The 37-year-old is a free agent after leaving Manchester United by mutual agreement this week and he recently said he turned down a two-year deal in the summer worth more than £300m a year from a Saudi club.

"I would love to see Ronaldo play in the Saudi league," said Prince Abdulaziz. "It would benefit the league, the sports eco-system in Saudi and will inspire the youth for the future. He's a role model to a lot of kids and has a big fanbase in Saudi."

Ronaldo scored in Portugal's 3-2 win over Ghana at the Qatar World Cup and Saudi may make its own bid to host the tournament. "Who wouldn't want to host the World Cup?" the prince said. "Any country in the world would love to host the World Cup."



▲ *The prince said there is 'a lot of interest' in the Premier League*

Director Ward stuns Liverpool as he quits club

Andy Hunter

Liverpool's sporting director, Julian Ward, has decided to leave the club at the end of the season, only months after replacing Michael Edwards in the post.

Ward officially succeeded the influential Edwards in the summer after being promoted from assistant sporting director, although he led Liverpool's recruitment of Luis Díaz and Darwin Núñez before then in a transitional leadership role.

The 41-year-old's decision has come as a shock to Liverpool, who are now considering whether to continue with the sporting director model that was first introduced under Edwards in 2016. Jürgen Klopp, who likes the structure and was close to both Edwards and Ward, will have a pivotal role in deciding how football operations should be run come the end of the season. The chief executive, Billy Hogan, will also be involved in the final decision.

No explanation has been given for Ward's exit but he has told Liverpool he intends to take a break at the end of the season and has no intention of starting a job at a new club in the immediate future.

Liverpool believe the advance notice from Ward, together with their long-established football strategy, will ensure business continues as normal this season. They have no reservations over their sporting director remaining in his role until the end of the campaign, with Ward's character and professional integrity unquestioned.

Meanwhile Uefa has still to be notified when the independent review into the chaotic scenes at May's Champions League final between Liverpool and Real Madrid in Paris will be published. European football's governing body aimed to have the report published this month but, with less than a week remaining, it is still waiting for confirmation of when the report will be received.

Results

Football

UEFA WOMEN'S CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Arsenal	3	2	1	0	9	3	+6	7
Juventus	3	1	2	0	4	2	+2	5
Lyon	3	1	1	1	5	6	-1	4
Zurich	3	0	0	3	1	8	-7	0

Juventus 1 Arsenal 1; Zurich 0 Lyon 3

Group D Barcelona 3 Bayern Munich 0; Benfica 1 Rosengård 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Barcelona	3	3	0	0	16	1	+15	9
Bayern Munich	3	2	0	1	5	6	-1	6
Benfica	3	1	0	2	3	12	-9	3
Rosengård	3	0	0	3	2	7	-5	0

FA WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Chelsea	8	7	0	1	20	6	+14	21
Arsenal	7	6	0	1	20	4	+16	18
Manchester Utd	7	6	0	1	18	5	+13	18
Manchester City	7	5	0	2	17	8	+9	15
Aston Villa	7	4	0	3	12	10	+2	12
West Ham	8	4	0	4	13	16	-3	12
Tottenham	6	3	0	3	11	11	0	9
Everton	7	3	0	4	7	9	-2	9
Brighton	7	2	1	4	10	26	-16	7
Liverpool	8	1	2	5	9	16	-7	5
Reading	8	1	1	6	9	20	-11	4
Leicester	8	0	0	8	2	17	-15	0

Reading (1) **3**
Primmer 45
Dowie 63
Troelsgaard 89

Liverpool (1) **3**
Stengel 16 68
Roberts 73

Golf

WOMEN'S COSTA DEL SOL OPEN (Málaga)
Leading first-round scores (GB/Ire unless stated)
66 C Gainer. **67** C Ciganda (Sp). **68** L Grant (Swe); M Metraux (Swi); A Meyssonnier (Fr); L Maguire. **69** A Munoz (Sp); M Stark (Swe); L Pace (SA); A Hewson; C Alexander (SA); J Karlsson (Swe); H Burke; N Iturrioz (Sp); A van Dam (Neth). **70** C Fernandez (Sp); C Tejedo (Sp); E Young; C Hedwall (Swe); K Henry; S Schober (Aut); M Skarpnord (Nor); S Bringner (Swe). **71** P Martin (Sp); K Spilkova (Cz); N Garcia (SA); M Thomson; E Arvidsson (Swe); F Johnson; C Williams. **72** A Pelaez (Sp); A Mora (Fr); N Broch Estrup (Den); S Witt (Ger); E Kristine Pedersen (Den); B Morgan. **73** T Koivisto (Fin); W Hillier (Aus); U Wikstroem (Fin); O Cowan (Ger); P Babnik (Svn); G Cowley; C Alonso (Sp); L Ström (Swe); R Davies; D Dagar (Ind); C Wolf (Aut); S Sönderby (Den); L Sobron (Sp)

AUSTRALIAN PGA CHAMPIONSHIP (Brisbane)
Leading first-round scores (Aus unless stated)
65 M Lee; J Lyras; J Scrivener. **66** A Scott; B Kennedy; A Quayle; P Cooke; Wang J (Kor). **67** D Ieremia (NZ); R Hisatsune (Jpn); P Pineau (Fr); M Antcliff; Liu W (Chn). **68** C Smith; G Ogilvy; A Meronk (Pol); N Højgaard (Den); D Micheluzzi; T Sinnott; C Wood; N Barbieri; Lee C (Kor); T Power-Horan; M Kawamura (Jpn); A Garcia-Heredia (Sp). **69** R Højgaard (Den); A Bland; D Lawson; J Felton; C John; D Hillier (NZ); C Crawford; M Leishman; S Brazel; S Strange; G Wiebe (US); A Canizares (Sp); L Johnston; S Allan

Greg Wood's racing tips

Doncaster 12.00 Caius Marcius **12.35** Lake Takapuna **1.10** Hurricane Bay **1.45** Barton Knoll **2.20** Our Follet **2.55** Everyday Champagne **3.30** Cornicello
Newbury 12.10 Jet Powered **12.45** Aucunrisque **1.20** Egbert **1.55** Stage Star **2.30** Paint The Dream **3.05** Dashel Drasher (nap) **3.40** Steal A March
Ffos Las 12.20 L'Astroboy **12.55** Dunbar **1.30** Quick Sharpener **2.05** Mucho Mas (nb) **2.40** Franco D'Aunou **3.15** Storm Force Ben **3.50** Ottoline

American football

NFL
Buffalo 28 Detroit 25

Fixtures

Football
Scottish Cup Third round Broomhill v Alloa (7.45pm)

Rugby union (7.45pm unless stated)
Gallagher Premiership
Harlequins v Gloucester; Newcastle v Exeter
United Championship
Stormers v Scarlets (5pm); Ulster v Zebre (7.35pm)

Cricket
First ODI New Zealand v India, Auckland (1.30am)
First ODI Sri Lanka v Afghanistan, Kandy (8.30am)

Record-breaker Ronaldo scores in fifth World Cup as Portugal see off Ghana

Portugal 3
Ronaldo 65pen, Félix 78, Rafael Leão 80

Ghana 2
A Ayew 73, Bukari 89

	Portugal	Ghana
Possession	62%	38%
Shots on target	4	3
Fouls	14	19

Nick Ames
Stadium 974

A laboured contest morphed into a thriller and, cutting through it all, Cristiano Ronaldo managed to own the story. That was hardly a surprise in the circumstances and it was certainly what the crowd, many dressed in Portugal shirts but a vast swathe clearly present to see one man only, demanded.

Their loyalty was rewarded by an emphatically converted penalty that brought a moment in history. Ronaldo became the first male player to score at five different World Cups and, whether you loathe the circus or adore the fanatical drive and egoism that make him such excruciatingly hard work at 37, it is an achievement nobody can brush off.

This was not vintage Ronaldo: it was a slower and more frustrated tribute act, albeit one that carried Portugal's only goalscoring threat for three-quarters of the game. At his peak he would have dismissed Ghana with a hat-trick but instead he spent the dying moments watching in horror from the bench as, having snuck behind the dozing goalkeeper Diogo Costa to steal the ball, Iñaki Williams stumbled when a sensational equaliser beckoned.



Osman Bukari celebrates after scoring Ghana's second goal

Ronaldo was among those to console Costa, clearly shaken by his error, at full time. It was all in a night's work for a player who is freshly unemployed.

"It was a week that finished this chapter," Ronaldo said of the storm surrounding his departure from Manchester United that engulfed the buildup.

"It is closed and now I want to start with the good foot. We started, we won, I want to help my team." That is ultimately what he did although the headlines would have looked different had two glaring misses within the first 13 minutes, a free header that he planted wide from four yards particularly astounding, proved decisive. A goal after the half-hour was correctly disallowed for a push, much to the dismay of his public, and until benefiting from a marginal decision both he and Portugal had been off the pace.

Ronaldo just beat the otherwise excellent Mohammed Salisu to the ball in the 65th minute but the contest was only close because, as on several prior occasions, he had not been quick to it. His touch was followed by a snick from Salisu, who was deemed by the referee Ismail Elfath to have caught Ronaldo on the follow through. VAR opted not to intervene and, in fairness, there was no clear and obvious error even though the award was soft.

Ronaldo cared little, in any case, and did the rest.

"This was a beautiful moment," he said. "It was an important win, we know the first match in these competitions is crucial, but also the world record makes me very proud." Those attending were treated, amid raucous delight, to his trademark celebration but it quickly risked being an exercise in hubris.

Ghana had set out cautiously, spending most of the first half playing a flat back five, but grew in confidence and had been the better side since the restart. They channelled that self-assuredness into an equaliser, the lively Mohammed Kudus centring through Danilo Pereira's legs from the left for André Ayew to tap in.

Otto Addo's players had, however, been erratic in possession and they were punished twice by the kinds of counterattack Portugal had struggled to stitch together.

The deciding goals came within seven minutes of Ayew's leveller and were both created by Bruno Fernandes, who thrived as the game became stretched. João Félix clipped the first in adroitly after Rahman Baba had been unable to cut out Fernandes's pass: he has struggled for Atlético Madrid but it was a timely reminder Ronaldo may have an heir apparent.

Or perhaps he has two. Almost immediately Ronaldo laid the ball off to Fernandes after a Ghana mistake, the pair cooperating more smartly than recent off-pitch interactions might have suggested, and his former club mate drove forward before playing Rafael Leão through. Leão, who had only just come on, has been billed as a potential star of this winter and began justifying the hype with a bending low finish.

Ronaldo was withdrawn to a predictable ovation, as well as equally foreseeable distaste on his part, and it seemed a victory lap could be prepared. But the Ghana substitute Osman Bukari postponed it with a well-taken header and, had Williams properly rewarded his own initiative deep into nine minutes of added time, the evening would have brought more than one exceptional achievement.

The match had become gripping from nowhere and Addo felt it had turned on the penalty incident, calling it "a special gift from the referee" and a "really wrong decision". His opposite number, Fernando Santos, could bask in its consequences.

"Cristiano is a phenomenal legend like many others who have come and gone," Santos said. "In 50 years' time we will continue to talk about him." At the current rate his ability to set the agenda will endure through the decades.



▼ *Rafael Leão scores Portugal's third goal to seal victory over Ghana*
JENNIFER LORENZINI/REUTERS



▲ *Ghana's captain, André Ayew, scores to bring his side level at 1-1*
GETTY IMAGES

Portugal
4-1-4-1
Costa; Cancelo, Dias, Danilo●, Guerreiro; Neves (Rafael Leão 77); B Silva (Palhinha 88), Fernandes●, Otávio (Carvalho 56), Félix (João Mário 88); Ronaldo (Ramos 88)

Ghana
3-4-3
Ati-Zigi; Amartey, Djiku (Semenyo 90), Salisu; Seidu● (Lamptey 66), Partey, Abdul Samed (Kyereh 90), Rahman; A Ayew● (J Ayew 77), Williams●, Kudus● (Bukari 77)

Referee Ismail Elfath (US) **Attendance** 42,662

Analysis
Sid Lowe *Stadium 974*



A night of absurd plot twists but the game's most reliable leading man steals spotlight once again

Oh no, not another Cristiano Ronaldo column. Well, what else could it be? *Who* else could it be? How about André Ayew, whose goal made it 1-1 and made a wild match of a night that, until then, really hadn't been? João Félix, who clipped in a lovely shot to put Portugal back into the lead? Rafael Leão, perhaps, guiding his first touch into the net. There was Osman Bukari, scoring with two minutes to go - well, 10 - and at the end Iñaki Williams, with a flash of cunning that caught out everyone; that almost saw Ghana catch a break, too.

Sneaking up behind the Portugal goalkeeper, Diogo Costa, Williams stole the ball from his feet in the last minute, the chance to end this 3-3 suddenly appearing, an entire stadium gasping, only to slip as he turned back towards goal.

Still seeming beyond belief long after the final whistle, that was the most extraordinary, most absurd moment of what almost turned out to be an unexpectedly extraordinary match. And yet *the* moment belonged to Ronaldo, not least because somehow it was always going to.

Perhaps because we make it so. But history had been made after all. And even if it had not, well, it's him. An hour had gone when Ronaldo ran into the left side of the area. He was beaten to the ball by Mohammed Salisu, or so it seemed. As they came together, though, Ronaldo tumbled and the referee blew for a penalty. And so there he was, in his place, his moment. It was one they had waited for, too. In front of him, phones were held up, cameras ready, capturing not just a piece of history but a piece of theatre.

Standing on the spot and in the spotlight again, as if he ever really left it, Ronaldo put the ball down. He looked up then down again, and closed his eyes for some time. He took big, deep breaths, blew out hard, then skipped to his left, ran up and struck the penalty high into the net, just above the keeper's hand. He did say he was bulletproof. It was his 819th career goal - eight hundred and nineteenth, for goodness sake - and his 118th for Portugal.

It also made him the first man to score at five World Cups: one against Iran in 2006, one against North Korea in 2010, one against Ghana in 2014, three against Spain, one against Morocco in 2018, and now this. He ran and leapt into the air, that familiar routine. Altogether now. Arms outstretched, as he came down, 40,000 people joined him in saying it: Siuuu! This is what they had come for. Some of them had been practising too.

The buildup had been dominated by the fallout in Manchester, to the extent of the doors to Portugal's training camp having to be closed. The exhaustion at fielding endless questions was palpable, the claims that none of it mattered barely credible. And none of that reduced the attention on him; it may even have enhanced it, increased the awareness that this, here, is a last chance. The walk to the stadium was lined with Portugal shirts, seven on the back. More than all the rest put together. En route, a dad was busy telling his sons how to siuuu. Turned out, that would come in useful.

"I believe Portugal is the best team at this World Cup," Ronaldo said. Look at the team, and maybe you can see it through the quality of the clubs they represent. Look and you see something else too. Porto, Manchester City, Manchester City, Paris Saint-Germain, Dortmund, Manchester United, Wolves, Porto, Manchester City, Atlético Madrid, unemployed. Yet still it was him they had come for. His was the only name really cheered when the teams were read out, the only name chanted too.

As they lined up before the game he shook hands with a small kid in the tunnel. The kid, turning to the child alongside, blurted out: "Oh my god!" They went out and Ronaldo stood for the national anthem, then stood for a long while, a line of cameras looking at him - which may have been why. His back turned to them, you could already picture the photos being captured. Say my name. Oh, they would. They might have done sooner in fact: it is not that Ronaldo could have got three here, it is that maybe he should have.

One chance was blocked by the keeper, another header went wide from close range. But then the moment came and from the spot, something almost symbolic: perhaps this game, his game, being decided like this when little else had happened. There was not much football but Ronaldo won it. Sound familiar? Only he hadn't. Barney Ronay had warned us to fast-forward to the moment when he won it with a late penalty. It came early but it wasn't so far off. Until, out of nowhere, it was. Suddenly, somehow, there were three goals, a real game. By then Ronaldo had been withdrawn to applause and with the score at 3-1. From the bench he watched Bukari score to make it 3-2, run to the corner, leap into the air and, yes, perform a siuuu of his own.

Five-star Cristiano
Ronaldo down the years



2006 *A first World Cup goal arrives from the penalty spot in Portugal's group stage match against Iran*



2010 *His only goal of the tournament, and first for Portugal in 16 months, comes in a 7-0 win over North Korea*



2014 *His winner against Ghana, also his 50th international goal, is not enough to secure a last-16 spot*



2018 *Three goals against Spain make him the oldest player to score an international hat-trick*



2022 *A goal against Ghana - from another penalty - makes him a five-times World Cup scorer*

Uruguay's familiar old faces frustrate in stodgy draw

Uruguay	**0**
South Korea	**0**

Jonathan Wilson
Education City Stadium

There appear to be three sorts of games at this World Cup. There are the games in which the stronger team (Spain, England, France) batter the weaker team. There are the shocks, in which the stronger team is undone by an opponent that is slightly better than it has anticipated (Saudi Arabia, Japan), and there are the evenly matched games in which nothing much happens (the others). With just one shot on target (plus two that hit the post) Uruguay v South Korea was very much in the third category.

The temptation is to come up with a tenuous grand theory as to why this should be. There is barely any data but could it be that all three types of game are the result of the lack of preparation time, four weeks compressed into four days? Some sides, having played in continental competition last year and comfortable with how they intend to play, are still in rhythm from their domestic seasons and so hit their stride immediately.

Others could have done with more time to fine-tune, to try to generate something approximating to the cohesive styles that now predominate at club level. Aware of their shortcomings they become naturally more risk-averse, defensive structures being far easier to assemble than the attacking systems that can overcome them, and the result is stodginess. And this was extremely stodgy - or, as the South Korea coach, Paulo Bento, put it, "a very competitive game with a very high level of play between two teams that respected each other".

One of the nicest things about World Cups is meeting old friends. Usually that means journalists, or Belgium, but Uruguay have a pleasing array of familiar faces so that watching them is like idly turning on a random snooker tournament in the middle of the afternoon and finding that Jimmy White is still gamely taking on John Higgins. There was Luis Suárez, scuffling around up front, a magnificent irritant - although, given he managed only 14 touches, perhaps neither so magnificent nor so irritating as he used to be. There, coming off the bench were the flared cheekbones of Edinson Cavani. And there, at the heart of the defence, gnarled, implacable, half as old as time, was Diego Godín. He even headed against the base of the post three minutes before half-time for old time's sake.



▲ *Matías Viña's athletic attempt at goal fails to trouble Kim Seung-gyu*

There was also Martín Cáceres still chugging up and down with his man-bun. Of the Uruguay back four it was he who had the most work to do, with Na Sang-ho South Korea's greatest threat. It was from the FC Seoul forward's low cross that Hwang Ui-jo fired over after 34 minutes. The right-back Kim Moon-hwan sank to his knees in despair which, given there was an hour still to play, seemed an overreaction - but perhaps he knew just how few chances there would be.

And Uruguay play in a pleasingly unchanging way. Football may always be developing. We may now live in a world of high lines and low blocks, of half-spaces and transitions. But Uruguay, for all the talk of the revolution wrought by their former coach Óscar Tabárez, remain steadfast, always defending - even if there was a slightly distressing moment early in the second half as Rodrigo Bentancur performed a figure-of-eight pirouette to extricate the ball from trouble just outside his own box.

Sometimes it is beautiful, as when José María Giménez dispossessed Son Heung-min with a delicious sliding tackle five minutes into the second half. But mostly it is just slightly frustrating: why, when they have such talent in the side, are they seemingly so reluctant to use it?

"We wanted to match their level of aggression," said Bento. "We managed to do so during the first half." At the Asian Cup in 2019 the criticism of South Korea was that they dominated the ball and did little with it. The first half here seemed to be following that pattern but Uruguay gradually began to assert themselves. "We couldn't put pressure on Korea and lost precision," said the Uruguay coach, Diego Alonso. "We had to change at half-time and were able to defend higher."

But they did not assert themselves enough to win the match, or really to cause much of a threat, at least until Federico Valverde pinged a 25-yarder against the post in the 89th minute. Avoiding defeat, perhaps, is the most important thing in the opener in the group but this was a game in which it felt both sides would happily have shaken hands on a draw at half-time.

Uruguay
4-3-3
Rochet; Cáceres, Godín, Giménez, Olivera (Viña 79); Valverde, Bentancur, Vecino (De la Cruz 78); Pellistri (Varela 88), Suárez (Cavani 64), Núñez

South Korea
4-2-3-1
Kim S-g; Kim M-h, Kim M-j, Kim Y-g, Kim J-s; Jung, Hwang I-b; Na (Lee K-i 75), Lee J-s (Son J-h 75), Son H-m; Hwang U-j (Cho G-s 74)

Referee Clément Turpin (Fr) **Attendance** 41,663

'He will play' Neymar injury not serious, insists Tite

Jonathan Liew
Lusail Stadium

The Brazil coach, Tite, has insisted Neymar will play again in this World Cup despite suffering a suspected sprained ankle in their 2-0 Group G win over Serbia. The forward came off with 11 minutes remaining and television footage appeared to show him hobbling and his ankle badly swollen.

He looked close to tears as he sat on the bench during the closing minutes of the game, before slowly limping back to the dressing room.

Neymar had been subjected to roughhouse tactics all night from an aggressive Serbian defence and was fouled nine times in the game as well as receiving numerous off-the-ball shoves.

But Tite, who otherwise enjoyed a near-perfect night as Brazil began their campaign with a convincing victory, said that Neymar would be assessed over the next 24-48 hours and was confident the injury was not serious.

"Don't worry, Neymar will play in the World Cup," he said. "He will keep playing, you can be sure about that."

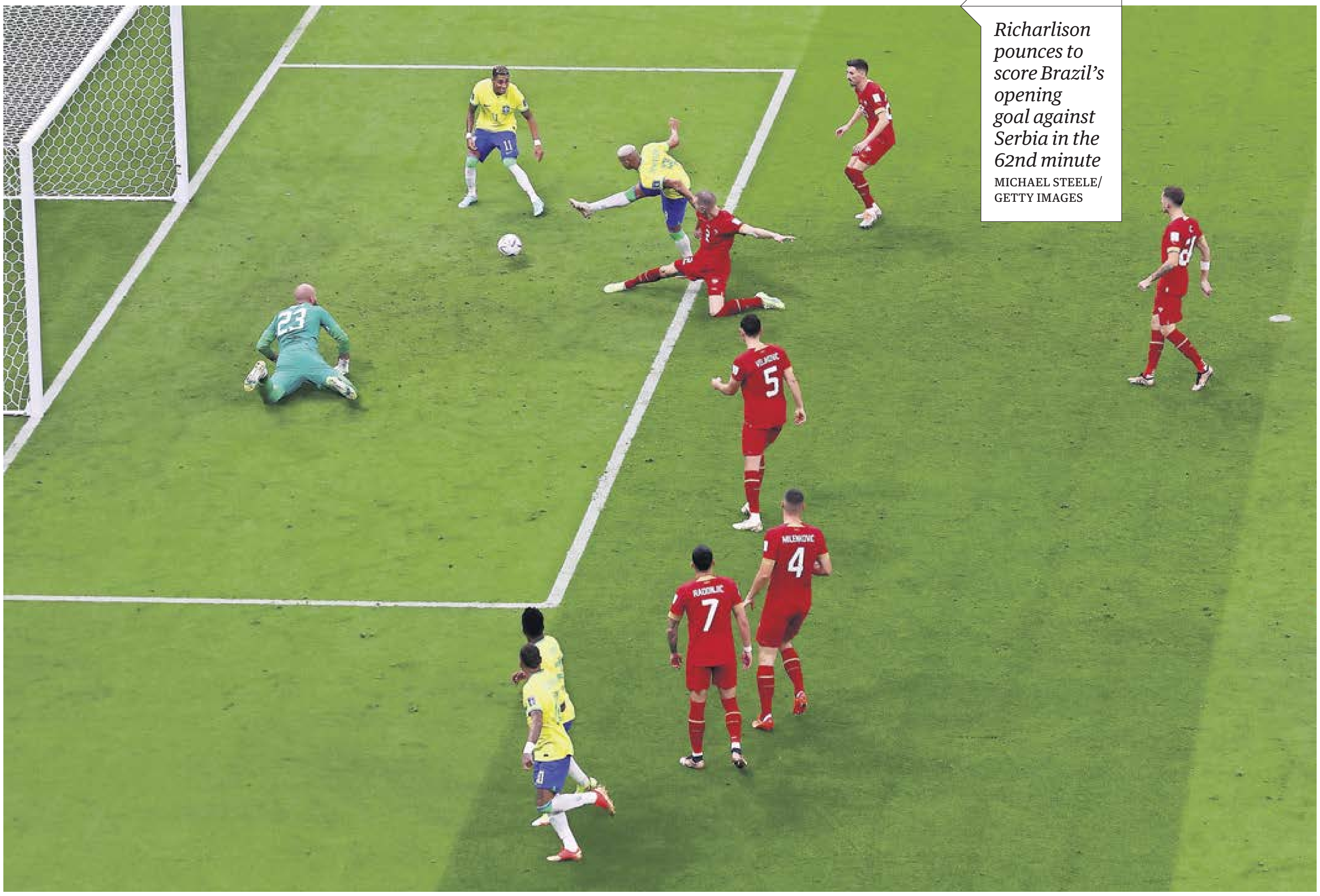
The Brazil team doctor, Rodrigo Lasmar, confirmed that Neymar had a "direct trauma" on his right ankle after being tackled by Serbia's Nikola Milenkovic. "We started immediate treatment on the bench. He continues with the physio but now we need to wait 24-48 hours for a better assessment. He felt this pain throughout the game, but chose to stay on the pitch to help his team after his injury. It's remarkable that he did this."

Perhaps Tite's relaxed demeanour was an attempt to avert the sort of injury drama that derailed Brazil's World Cup campaign in 2014, when a fractured vertebra ended Neymar's tournament at the quarter-final stage, and a hysterical squad held up his empty shirt as they sang the national anthem before their semi-final against Germany. Brazil went on to lose the match 7-1.



▲ *Neymar will be assessed in the next 24-48 hours, according to Tite*

Favourites up and running in Qatar



Richarlison pounces to score Brazil's opening goal against Serbia in the 62nd minute
MICHAEL STEELE/GETTY IMAGES

Richarlison's double helps Brazil rediscover swagger

Brazil	**2**
Richarlison 62 73	
Serbia	**0**

	Brazil	Serbia
Possession	59%	41%
Shots on target	8	0
Fouls	6	12

Jonathan Liew
Lusail Stadium

Yes, Brazil: that's pretty much how we remembered you. This is a new generation of Brazilian players, a new era and a new World Cup challenge. And yet by the same token this was a classic Brazilian tournament performance: the sort that feels as if it is being put on for our benefit. On a still night in the giant golden ark of the Lusail Stadium, the tournament favourites played the game you expect from tournament favourites: solid, expansive and embellished with the sort of effortless brilliance that makes other countries furrow their brow a little.

The match had three distinct periods. In period one Brazil started pretty tamely, perhaps even uncertainly, picking away at Serbia with tempo but not a great deal of poise. As the second half progressed they began to warm to the task, cathartically breaking the deadlock with a goal from Richarlison. In the final half hour they simply cut loose: riotous skills, relentless waves of attack and an early goal of the tournament contender from Richarlison, who scored his second with an outrageous bicycle kick.

It was Vinícius Júnior and Neymar who combined for Richarlison's goals, and this trio - with Raphinha also plugging away gamely on the right - look on early evidence like the most balanced and deadly attack in Qatar: pure trickery and pure speed, with a sharp cutting tool up front. Casemiro was a masterful string-puller at the base of midfield.

Alex Sandro had a superb game at left-back, which was reckoned to be one of Brazil's problem areas. Serbia were actually pretty good for 45 minutes. By the end, however, they looked not just beaten but broken, having been made to chase light beams.

And it is not as if Brazil are automatic favourites to win these sorts of games any more. Their World Cup record against European teams since 2010 now reads: played nine, won three, drew two, lost four. Every tournament they seem to sweat a little more, fight a little harder, stand out a little less.

But this, perhaps, was a reminder that Brazil are at their best when they play with that little dash of imperial arrogance, the fearlessness and verve that pokes teams in the chest and asks: well, how many stars on your badge?

And of course, they can play with a little bit of devil too. Serbia got the sort of game they wanted: aggressive, physical, spicy and often spiky. Neymar got his usual kicking for being Neymar, and ended up limping off 10 minutes from time. But no team with Casemiro, Thiago Silva, Richarlison and Raphinha in its ranks is ever going to shirk from a battle. At one point Raphinha tackled Filip Mladenovic and then simply glared at him, just to make sure he knew he had been tackled.

Meanwhile Andrija Zivkovic was sticking to Vinícius like an environmental activist gluing himself to a London road junction. Vinícius came a little deeper. Zivkovic followed. Vinícius drifted right to the touchline. Zivkovic followed. Vinícius tracked inside. Zivkovic followed. Later that night, as an exhausted Vinícius climbed into bed at the Westin Doha Hotel, he would find Zivkovic already in there waiting for him, a despicable smile creasing across his face as he rolled over and took most of the duvet with him.

Few chances, then, but some moments of promise for Brazil. And like the stubborn pistachio at the bottom of the bag, Brazil probed and scraped and prised and pulled, and eventually worked Serbia loose. There had been openings for Neymar and Sandro before finally Neymar coaxed the ball into the penalty area with a delicious drop of the shoulder. Vinícius took over and curled a shot at Vanja Milinkovic-Savic; Richarlison cleaned up the rebound.

And for the rest of the game Brazil were simply inexorable. Casemiro rattled the bar. Tite flexed some of the awe-inspiring muscle on his bench: Rodrygo, Antony, Gabriel Martinelli.

But the game had already seen its crowning moment. With 11 minutes remaining, Vinícius nonchalantly teased over a cross with the outside of the boot. Richarlison flicked the ball up in the air with his toe, flung himself skywards, his blond head rotating on its axis like a light show, before smashing the ball in with a pure capoeira swipe: a goal straight out of a soft drink advert, filmed in one clean take.

Tite talks a lot about balance: between attack and defence, flair and resilience, exuberance and focus. This was a performance to make flesh out of his words. If one was being critical, perhaps Brazil could have made a little more of their dominance later on. But really that would be griping for the sake of it. Three points, broad smiles and a familiar swagger that felt like a favourite band playing all their old hits. Welcome back, lads.

Brazil
4-1-2-3
Alisson; Danilo, Marquinhos, Thiago Silva, Alex Sandro; Casemiro; Paquetá (Fred 75), Neymar (Antony 80); Raphinha (Martinelli 87), Richarlison (Jesus 79), Vinícius Jr (Rodrygo 76)

Serbia
3-4-1-2
V Milinkovic-Savic; Milenkovic, Veljkovic, Pavlovic●; Zivkovic (Radonjic 57), Lukic● (Lazovic 66), Gudelj● (Ilic 57), Mladenovic (Vlahovic 66); S Milinkovic-Savic; Tadic, A Mitrovic (Maksimovic 83)

Referee Alireza Faghani (Iran) **Attendance** 88,103

Analysis

Barney Ronay *Lusail Stadium*



Brilliant finish provides the champagne moment as World Cup finds its fizz

A little presumptuously perhaps, the Lusail Stadium, the vast and startling mothership of this tournament, insists on calling itself the Iconic. It was the Iconic before the only pre-World Cup event of its lifespan, an awkward test affair where, iconically, there was not enough water. Fair enough. Maybe one day every stadium will be iconic for 15 minutes.

But the Lusail did host an authentic moment here, one of those instantly fixed and screen-printed Word Cup happenings, a goal for the montage, the expertly sketched animation; and an indicator in its own way that no matter how much you stretch it thin, compromise it, fudge its outline, the World Cup will keep on being the World Cup.

It was the second goal in a controlled, ultimately boisterous 2-0 victory for Brazil; and a moment of fast-twitch stillness, explosive calm, violent precision.

Vinícius Júnior provided the pass, cutting in from the left. Richarlison was close to the penalty spot. He had enough space to turn and shoot but the ball was pinged a little too quickly at his feet. The first touch took it straight up in a loop, red shirts closing in.

The real magic of the finish that followed was the way Richarlison let the ball drop over one shoulder, then swivelled under its arc, letting it drop out of his line of sight, parabola imprinted on his brain, physics crunched, then turned blind to complete a thrilling mid-air jump-volley, catching the ball flush and sweet to send it zinging into the near corner of the Serbia goal.

It was simply a brilliant finish, a goal created out of the air, and a piece of balletic physical creativity. There was a shout, a roar, a kind of gurgle around the stadium as the ball hit the net, then a writhing sea of yellow in the corner as the players formed a classic bouncing scrum of love.

And this was one of those deep cuts, a World Cup moment people will try to replicate, the Richarlison flip, a sofa-leap finish, a grazed elbow at break time. At this most unreal of global shows, it felt like a draft of something real.

This was a significant game for Brazil's attack in other ways. Richarlison was a constant high-grade pest in the second half, and sharp as a wet razor in front of goal. With Vinícius also playing his part in both goals, the thought occurred: maybe this is the way to get the best out of Neymar.

Don't rely on Neymar. Don't let Neymar drag the game his way. Keep a chunk of Neymar in reserve. It felt timely, too. Neymar left the pitch on 80 minutes and later emerged with an ankle looking swollen, limping heavily. After the game the Brazil medical team spoke of a "direct trauma", result of one of nine Serbia fouls. "Neymar will play in the World Cup," Tite declared. The good news, for the first time since Neymar began playing World Cups is that it may not be terminal if he is to miss a game from here.

And progress also for the man himself. Neymar has spoken about the fact this may well be his last World Cup, that he struggles a bit with these things, that the pressure takes pieces out of him. Perhaps, in an odd kind of way, it is quite encouraging: a reasonable reaction to his unreasonable existence.

Both his previous World Cups have been odd, from 2014's Jesus complex tournament to the super-brat persona of 2018, when he basically invented a new tactical form, tantrum-ball, *Gegen*-whinging. Talking about protecting himself: maybe this is a sign of something shifting. Neymar is key for Brazil. But he was also an ensemble player here.

There was a genuine crackle of static inside the Iconic at kick-off. It is an absurdly spectacular lighted box, another monument to the ghosts of workers passed, to the cold hard edge of Qatar's will to power. From the outside it looks like a giant alien potpourri basket. Inside, the stands are so steep one can feel the noise bouncing around, the chill synthetic air spiralling out through the vast and glorious howling-mouth roof hole.

Tite picked an attacking team, with Richarlison and Raphinha ready to track and press while Neymar drifted. It was an odd shape at times, with a high front four and a slightly overworked midfield. Luckily Casemiro has had some intensive training recently in balancing a listing ship.

For a while Vinícius looked the sharpest edge in Brazil's attack, feet battering the turf, a man who seems to be playing at all times on one of Doha's endless supply of high-spec moving walkways.

Brazil were cagey in the first half against a strong, organised Serbia team. But Neymar did play the key role in the opener. It was his run, a surge from a standing start, a jink, a stop and a surge past two players that presented the ball at the feet of Vinícius on the left. His low shot was palmed out and Richarlison was there to finish gleefully.

And by the end Brazil were pretty much rampant, pinging in shots, hitting the woodwork, swarming in packs. This was Richie's day, but also a day to shake a little of the Neymar-*dependência* of the past. Icons can be heavy, burdensome things. Brazil looked a little lighter here. They gave us a moment. They looked, by the end, like deserving favourites.

Brazil gave us a moment and looked like deserving favourites



◀ *The Brazil players celebrate in front of their fans following the 2-0 victory over Serbia* TOM JENKINS/ THE GUARDIAN

Emotional Embolo breaks Cameroon hearts

Switzerland	**1**
Embolo 48	
Cameroon	**0**

Louise Taylor

Al Janoub Stadium



▲ *Breel Embolo is subdued despite scoring Switzerland's winner*

Breel Embolo grew up in Basel but was born in Cameroon's capital, Yaoundé, and did not receive Swiss citizenship until eight years ago. That explains why the Monaco forward refrained from celebrating one of the simplest, yet potentially most significant, goals he will ever score.

In an awkward group this was a game Switzerland needed to win and, in the 48th minute, Embolo ensured it would prove mission accomplished. It was not Embolo's fault his six-yard finish drove a stake through Cameroonian hearts. "Football writes these stories," Murat Yakin, the Swiss coach, said. "I told Breel: 'Cameroon are your friends but they are your opponents too.' I'm happy with his performance."

The opening week of Qatar 2022 has showcased plenty of intricate passing, intelligent movement and sometimes kaleidoscopic positional interchanging but Cameroon introduced a retro theme, reminding everyone that crashing balls into the corners has not necessarily had its day. The gameplan was centred heavily on getting the ball long and early to Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting. The Bayern Munich striker remains familiar to his former public at Stoke, and so does Switzerland's Xherdan Shaqiri. Now with Chicago Fire, Shaqiri is Switzerland's creative catalyst but took time to get going.

Shaqiri's every first-half manoeuvre was shadowed by Cameroon's left-back, Nouhou Tolo. When Shaqiri switched wings he experienced similar treatment from Collins Fai.

Such early struggles dictated that, although the Indomitable Lions did not always get their own way in a central midfield staffed for Switzerland by Arsenal's Granit Xhaka and Nottingham Forest's Remo Freuler, they were frequently free to concentrate on feeding Choupo-Moting.

Yakin had left Fabian Schär on the bench and instead paired Nico Elvedi and Manuel Akanji in central defence. Choupo-Moting, before fading, revelled in subjecting that pair to a thorough workout, on one occasion flicking the ball beyond Akanji only to shoot tepidly at Yann Sommer.

An even better chance arrived when Bryan Mbeumo unleashed a shot that Sommer parried into the path of the well-placed Karl Toko Ekambi, whose effort veered wildly off target. Otherwise Toko Ekambi found himself efficiently, and intelligently, marked by Silvan Widmer.

Rigobert's Song's tactics may have been straight out of the Sam Allardyce playbook but as Sommer saved again, this time from Martin Hongla, Switzerland looked rattled. By half-time they had barely threatened, failing to muster an effort on target. Moreover, Cameroon's key midfielder, Napoli's André-Frank Zambo Anguissa, had finished the first 45 minutes strongly.

Yet for all Cameroon's high-pressing, full-back-propelled counter-attacking, their defence looked a bundle of nerves on those, admittedly strictly rationed, occasions Switzerland delivered the ball into their penalty area. From one such incursion in the 45th minute they should have scored but Akanji botched an inviting headed opening after meeting Freuler's corner.

Maybe that miss galvanised Switzerland, who emerged for the second half in altogether slicker, sharper passing mode and were swiftly rewarded when Embolo struck.

With the defence having lost concentration Shaqiri was permitted to capitalise on smart approach work from Xhaka and Freuler and sent a low cross curving towards the similarly unattended scorer. All that remained was for Embolo, who has established a charity foundation helping refugees in Switzerland and disadvantaged children in Cameroon, to stroke the ball home from six yards before that impassive reaction.

It was Switzerland's first shot on target and, briefly, the African drums and vuvuzelas fell silent. The soundtrack had resumed by the time Zambo Anguissa's superb interception prevented Embolo from registering another goal and André Onana's fabulous save denied Ruben Vargas.

After that Switzerland retreated, packing their defence. With Choupo-Moting a shadow of his first-half self, Cameroon could find no way through.

"It's difficult to lose a game we dominated in the first half," Song said. "I feel disappointed but we have only three players with previous World Cup experience – and there are two more games."

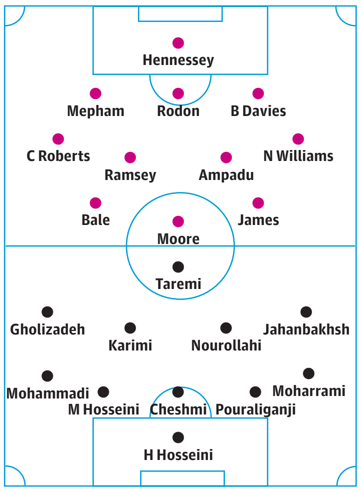
Switzerland
4-2-3-1
Sommer; Widmer, Akanji, Elvedi, Rodriguez (Cömert 90); Freuler, Xhaka; Shaqiri (Okafor 72), Sow (Frei 71), Vargas (Rieder 81); Embolo (Seferovic 72)

Cameroon
4-3-3
Onana; Fai, Castelletto, Nkoulou, Tolo; Zambo Anguissa, Hongla (Ondoua 68), Gouet; Mbeumo (Ngamaleu 81), Choupo-Moting (Aboubakar 74), Toko Ekambi (Nkoudou 74)

Referee Facundo Tello (Arg) **Attendance** 39,089

Wales
Iran

Today 10am **Group B**



Wales
Subs from Ward, A Davies, Gunter, Lockyer, Cabango, Wilson, Morrell, J Williams, Thomas, Levitt, Colwill, Smith, Johnson, Harris, James
Doubtful Ampadu
Injured None

Iran
Subs from Niazman, Abedzadeh, Rezaeian, Hajsafi, Khalizadeh, Kanaanizadegan, Jalali, Ezatolahi, Amiri, Ghoddos, Torabi, Ansarifard, Azmoun
Doubtful None
Injured Beiranvand

one booking from suspension *(probable teams)*

Venue Ahmad bin Ali Stadium
Referee Mario Escobar (Gua)

Previous meeting

Iran 0 Wales 1
A goal from Phil Dwyer settled the only previous meeting between the two countries in a 1978 friendly that took place in Tehran. Iran went on to draw with Scotland in their first World Cup finals appearance that year.

Key clash

Joe Rodon v Mehdi Taremi
The Tottenham defender on loan at Rennes will have his hands full against the Porto forward Taremi, who scored twice in Iran's heavy loss to England.



Managers

Rob Page
Still waiting for his first win since qualifying for the World Cup in June

Carlos Queiroz
Ex-assistant to Sir Alex Ferguson at Manchester United in third spell with Iran

Weather
28°

Follow the action

TV BBC One
Radio BBC 5 Live/TalkSport
theguardian.com Join Rob Smyth from 10am for minute-by-minute coverage of the match

'Let them play the game': Queiroz tired of being quizzed about politics

Continued *from back page*

Tuesday. Taremi later added: "I cannot change anything, thousands of other people like me cannot change anything."

Queiroz was earlier asked whether it was "fair for the western media and their journalists to keep asking Iranian footballers political questions?" The 69-year-old replied: "They have the right, the press have the right to make the questions that they understand are the right questions. We have the right to give the right answers. It is just a matter that we respect each other.

"There is for us not any problem with your question, whatever it is. It is important that, if we answer whatever we want, you also need to respect that … There is nothing wrong that the international press make the questions that they want. It is the freedom of the press and we have the freedom to answer."

Queiroz, who confirmed that the goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand would not feature owing to concussion protocols, said his players were desperate to focus on football. "Let them play the game," he said. "This is what they want to do. Play for the people of Iran. Players are not the enemies of the supporters. To make them the only people that need to give you answers about human being problems all over the world, you can judge that. I don't think it's fair. I think it is time to ask other coaches and players about other issues in the world, and I think there are other issues in the world."

As far as the football was concerned Queiroz repeatedly referred to Wales's supporters as the Red Wall, describing the atmosphere they create akin to a "football party or show", and he reserved special praise for Gareth Bale, who is set to break Wales's all-time men's appearance record by winning his 110th cap against Iran. Queiroz admitted Sir Alex Ferguson tried to sign Bale when the pair worked together at Manchester United.

"He's one of the best and in this moment is not only the top player of the team but also the character, the leader inside the pitch in terms of conducting the stability of the team, managing the tempo of the game," Queiroz said of the Wales captain. "He is a very intelligent player. I didn't have the opportunity to work with him despite the fact that he was one of the players that in those days [at Manchester United] we tried to bring in. He is the image of 'one team'."

Bale, who made his senior Wales debut aged 16 against Trinidad & Tobago in 2006, scored an 82nd-minute penalty to earn a point against the USA in their group opener on Monday but knows victory against Iran is vital if they are to have a chance of progressing to the last 16. "On a personal level it is an amazing achievement, an honour to represent my country so many times but it is more important to try and get the victory if we can and make it more special," Bale said. "We won't just look at the England game and think it's going to be a walkover just because England beat them 6-2; we won't get sucked into that. It is going to be a difficult game."

Bale said he hoped schoolchildren in Wales would be able to watch their game for a "mini history lesson". "Being a 10am kick-off in Wales, if I was one of the teachers, I'd let them watch the game," the 33-year-old said with a smile.

"I hope they do. It's a historical moment in Wales, for us to be at a World Cup. Some of the parents of kids I know all want to watch the game but don't want to take them off school, so I think a lot of schools will put the game on for them to cheer us on and get behind us. It's a mini history lesson and hopefully it'll be a great occasion for all of them."

Qatar Beyond the football

This is a World Cup like no other. For the past 12 years the Guardian has been reporting on the issues surrounding Qatar 2022, from corruption and human rights abuses to the treatment of migrant workers and discriminatory laws. The best of our journalism is gathered on our dedicated Qatar: Beyond the Football home page for those who want to go deeper into the issues beyond the pitch.
theguardian.com/news/series/qatar-beyond-the-football



Bale ready for big occasion



The Wales captain trains before the game against Iran, in which he is set to earn his 110th cap
LEE SMITH/REUTERS



Wales fans get green light for rainbow attire against Iran

Ben Fisher
Doha

The Football Association of Wales has been reassured by Fifa that supporters with rainbow-coloured clothing and flags will be allowed to enter the stadium for today's match against Iran and that the policy will be applied across all World Cup venues.

The FAW held urgent talks with the tournament organisers after Wales staff and fans had multicoloured bucket hats, shoelaces and wristbands confiscated before their Group B opener against the USA. Wales were among the nations to U-turn on wearing the rainbow-coloured OneLove armband in support of LGBTQ+ rights after Fifa threatened sporting sanctions.

Fifa and the Qatari authorities have been in dialogue after the FAW sought urgent clarity over the circumstances that led to supporters being ordered to remove rainbow-coloured clothing if they were to enter the Ahmad bin Ali Stadium.

The FAW's chief executive, Noel Mooney, described Fifa's action over the armband as "cheap" and "pretty low", adding: "We were told this was going to be a really inclusive, welcoming, warm World Cup. That is not what I have seen, I have to say. To have our fans having their bucket hats taken off them is just appalling. Their voice was taken away, the players' voices were taken away by the armband. For that we are deeply disappointed."

Before receiving assurances from Fifa yesterday Wales made a point of reiterating their inclusive message to fans by displaying rainbow-coloured flags at their Al Sadd Sports Club training base.

A large rainbow flag is draped from a pitch-side tent and corner flags decorated with the Welsh dragon were changed in support of the LGBTQ+ community.

An FAW statement said: "In response to the FAW, Fifa has confirmed that fans with Rainbow Wall bucket hats and rainbow flags will be allowed entry to the stadium for Cymru's match against Iran on Friday. All World Cup venues have been contacted and instructed to follow the agreed rules and regulations. The FAW urges Fifa to adhere to their message that everybody will be welcome in Qatar during the World Cup and continue to highlight any further human rights issues."

> ***'To have our fans having bucket hats taken off them is just appalling'***
>
> **Noel Mooney**
> *FAW chief executive*

When the streets of Doha felt like Llanelli on St David's Day

Elis James



Furrowed brows at half-time. Old friends raised knowing eyebrows and exhaled. The concourse of the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium was the kind of place you bumped into friends from school you hadn't seen for years, but everyone skipped pleasantries to go straight to the important stuff: "Why wasn't Kieffer playing? Don't we miss Joe Allen in midfield? Oh, you've left the DVLA to start your own business and you've just had twins? Nice one."

Wales were 1-0 down and had been dreadful, an uncharacteristically poor performance after a strange day. Maybe this is what World Cups are always like. I had nothing to go on.

As we walked around Doha, Mexicans, Argentinians and Ecuadorians recognised our replica shirts and shouted "Wales! Gales! Wales!" We were clapped on to the metro by some Brazilians who asked for a photo with us. Astonishingly they knew about John Charles and the match our two countries played in the 1958 World Cup quarter-finals. If these fans were paid-for Fifa corporate shills, they had at least done the background reading.

As we walked around the Souq Waqif market there were local teenagers in Chelsea and Real Madrid shirts, proof if you needed it that even tiny gas- and oil-rich states in the Middle East aren't immune to football's global reach. The sheer number of people who mentioned Gareth Bale brought home the level of his fame. He is box office in a way that makes Anthony Hopkins, Catherine Zeta-Jones or Richard Burton shrink by comparison. Not bad for the son of a school caretaker from Cardiff.

Wales fans were filmed by the locals singing *Calon Lân* and I listened to my friend Trystan chat to an Ecuadorian woman in the international language of football, marvelling as he discussed Allen's hamstrings with her in a Llangefni accent so strong it could knock the Earth off its axis. As we walked to the ground via a shopping mall the size of Gloucester, fans from the US unsarcastically wished us luck and hoped we'd have a good tournament.

Maybe I am too schooled in the ways of British club football but it felt like a glimpse into a parallel universe – a conspicuous, almost unsettling lack of wanker signs as we walked to the ground past another Sunglass Hut and Louis Vuitton.

Eventually, excitedly taking photos of every Wales flag I saw became unsustainable, as we walked past restaurants and hotels that rose from the desert but were decked out like a primary school in Llanelli on St David's Day. After a pilgrimage to the giant Welsh bucket hat in one of the fan zones I took a photo of the sign describing Wales to the curious and uninitiated: "Wales is a nation that's home to acts of kindness, global business, open arms and brilliant ideas …" (if you want to find out more about our fans, our culture and our epic country, scan this QR code).

When the Arsenal and Wales centre-half Mel Charles returned home from our last World Cup the ticket conductor at Swansea railway station spotted his suitcase and asked if he'd been on his holidays. "We'd just played in the World Cup quarter-finals," said Charles, incredulously. "Maybe he hadn't been reading the papers." A lot has changed since 1958.

> *Bale is box office in a way that makes Anthony Hopkins, Catherine Zeta-Jones or Richard Burton shrink by comparison*



Alongside 1,600 others I attended a party at a hotel, drinking Budweiser on the 55th floor at prices that were enough to make your knees knock. Joe Ledley was mobbed, Welsh football's cultural attaché Dafydd Iwan played *Yma o Hyd* to scenes of delirium. I bumped into an old school friend of Gareth "GO" Jones, the schoolteacher who took me and hundreds like me to my first Wales international as a child, an act that had as profound an influence on my personality as learning to read.

GO devoted himself completely selflessly to grassroots and youth football in west Wales, a lifetime of thankless tasks that came from an entirely pure, uncontaminated love of the game. *"Dychmyga, Elis. Cymru yng Nghwpan y Byd. Bydde Gareth wrth ei fodd."* ("Imagine, Elis. Wales in a World Cup. Gareth would have been delighted.")

I spoke to members of the Rainbow Wall who had brought rainbow bucket hats to put on any empty seats, to represent their LGBTQ+ friends who didn't feel they could be there. Qatar could be brilliant. It was never far from being bleak.

I'm sure if we'd qualified more often, our first game in a World Cup would have been less emotionally charged, an opening match of the group stage feeling as routine as brushing your teeth or apologising to the cashier at Boots for not having an Advantage card. If you take our form since the inception of the World Cup in 1930 as a guide, this will happen next when I am 106. No wonder I had a selfie with the Rwandan security guard who was an Arsenal fan and loved Aaron Ramsey. I wanted to soak it all in. We all did.

At the ground the anthem crackled but the team were listless. Nervy and flat-footed, we were lucky to go into the break 1-0 down. Kieffer Moore came on, the team improved immediately and they began to play with the zip the occasion demanded. Bale won the penalty, Bale took the penalty, our end went crackers. He Came, He Saw, He Equalised.

At full-time Neco Williams wept for his grandfather, who had died the day before. It reminded me of Ramsey, sobbing on the turf of the Cardiff City Stadium after we qualified as his thoughts turned to Gary Speed, the managerial adrenaline shot Welsh football needed so badly in 2010, and for whom qualification to a World Cup was always the ultimate ambition.

I was told Wales fans had their rainbow bucket hats confiscated on the way into the ground and I wondered how many more promises would be broken before the tournament ended. Welcome to the World Cup.

Elis James has donated his fee for this column to Amnesty International, which is campaigning for Qatar and Fifa to establish a compensation fund for migrant workers

Pickford must shut out echoes of the past in USA clash

Keeper should be wary of the experiences of Rob Green and Bert Williams, humiliated 60 years apart

Ed Aarons

At least Rob Green can laugh about it now. “I was doing the school run when I found out England had drawn USA in their group at the World Cup,” the former goalkeeper wrote in the Mail on Sunday this week. “I had just enough time to send one tweet, with one emoji, a pair of eyes. As if to say: ‘Well this is awkward.’”

But despite his blunder that helped the USA hold Fabio Capello’s side to a 1-1 draw in their opening match in 2010, Green - who is working as a pundit for BBC radio in Qatar - is not the only England goalkeeper to have bitter memories of facing them at a World Cup.

A few months before that last meeting at a World Cup Bert Williams, who conceded the only goal of the game when the two countries met in Brazil in 1950, said: “It’s been 60 years. It’s taken a lot of forgetting as far as I am concerned.”

Despite being more than 72 years in the past, that victory in Belo Horizonte is acknowledged as one of the biggest shocks in the tournament’s history. Stanley Matthews later said: “I thanked my lucky stars I hadn’t been a part of it,” having been controversially left out of the starting lineup after missing England’s opening game against Chile.

Even though they reached the semi-finals of the inaugural World Cup in 1930, it was the first time the United States had faced England, who were highly fancied as they featured Billy Wright, Tom Finney and Stan Mortensen. By contrast all of the USA team were amateurs while their goalkeeper, Frank Borghi, was a former baseball player who needed his defenders to take the goal-kicks because he never kicked the ball.

However, an inspired performance from Borghi - who drove a hearse for his day job - somehow managed to keep England at bay. “For the first 20 minutes England were all over us. I think they hit the woodwork,” said the USA’s Walter Bahr in an interview with the Guardian in 2010. “As the game went on, England began to get desperate.”

The winning goal, in the 38th minute, was scored by Joe Gaetjens - a Haiti-born dishwasher from New York who went on to play professionally in France - even if there remains a debate as to whether he meant it. “It should have been 10-1,” Williams said in 2009. “The American team turned up wearing sombreros, smoking cigars and they only had about six kicks of the ball in 90 minutes. Unfortunately one of them took a big deflection and wrongfooted me for the winning goal.”

His memory has been disputed by several American players, including Bahr, who took the shot. “He didn’t get a clean head at it but he definitely made a concerted effort,” Bahr said. “Joe was a guy who had a nose for the goal. He scored goals where you didn’t know how he got to the ball, let alone scored the goals.”

Gaetjens’s life ended in tragedy after being arrested in Haiti, in July 1964, by the Tonton Macoute, the militia of the dictator François “Papa Doc” Duvalier. He was never seen again.

Only two members of the American side - Bahr and the defender Harry Keough - faced England in their next meeting, three years later in a friendly at Yankee Stadium in New York. A few months before England suffered that 6-3 defeat by Hungary at Wembley two goals from Nat Lofthouse sealed a win for them by the same score in the States. It was the start of a series of one-sided contests including a 10-0 thumping in 1964 as the USA struggled.

The two countries did not meet again until 1985 in Los Angeles, when two goals apiece from Gary Lineker and Kerry Dixon sealed a 5-0 win for England. But with the USA having failed until 1990 to qualify for the World Cup after their exploits in Brazil, the 2-0 win over Graham Taylor’s side in the US Cup a year before the 1994 tournament on home soil was the springboard for making it through the group stages for the first time since 1930.

The match in Boston included Paul Ince becoming England’s first black captain, a significant moment the midfielder later said led to him being sent “letters from people who weren’t even into football”. “They’d written to me saying, ‘We have got kids who come from the kind of background you’ve come from. You captaining the country is a shining light for our children.’”

Alan Shearer’s double did for Bora Milutinovic’s side on their first visit to Wembley in September 1994 and the United States have still to score in three visits to London - most recently in a 3-0 defeat in November 2018. But after Clint Dempsey’s goal in Rustenburg embarrassed Green and the story of Belo Horizonte, Jordan Pickford should be wary of taking anything for granted this time around.



▲ *Rob Green’s howler allows USA to equalise against England in 2010*
MARTIN ROSE/GETTY IMAGES

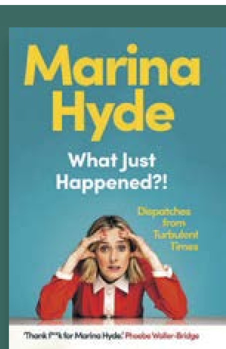


The winning goal for the United States was scored by Joe Gaetjens - a Haiti-born dishwasher from New York

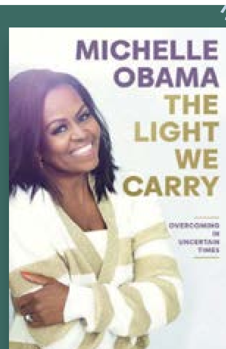
◀ *England’s Bert Williams looks back forlornly after Joe Gaetjens’s goal*
POPPERFOTO/GETTY IMAGES

Christmas gifts for inquiring minds

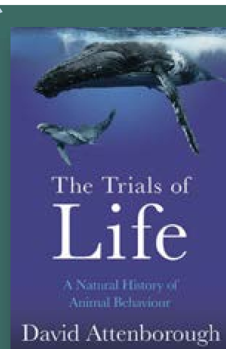
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The Guardian Bookshop

Americans lifted by English game, claims Adams

USA captain says coverage of the Premier League on TV helped football to advance on the other side of the Atlantic

Bryan Armen Graham
Doha

Tyler Adams, now the USA's captain, was a 13-year-old New York Red Bulls academy prospect in 2012 when NBC became the exclusive US media rights-holder for the Premier League in a deal that has since been credited with propelling soccer to new heights of popularity in the United States.

Until then nearly all English league matches were carried on Fox Soccer, a pay channel buried deep down the cable listings, inevitably limiting the sport's mainstream exposure. NBC's deal for both the English and Spanish language media rights to all 380 Premier League fixtures - for a then-bargain fee of $250m (£206m) over three years that has since been renewed for $2.7bn (£2.2bn) over the next six - established soccer in the American sports firmament as never before by making matches available on both free-to-air television and NBC's family of cable networks.

"Growing up, the Premier League was always the dream," Adams said yesterday. "I grew up a huge Thierry Henry fan, partially because he played for New York Red Bulls but also because I watched a lot of Arsenal games as well. I admired him, how he played the game. I think in America you see a lot of young players tuning into a lot of the Premier League games. They're on in the mornings; they're easy to find."

When the United States meet England in a blockbuster group-stage tie tonight at the Al Bayt Stadium they will in effect be facing one of the reasons for the sport's rising profile back home. For the 23-year-old Adams, the wider exposure and accessibility of the Premier League further cultivated a dream that was planted when he joined New York Red Bulls during Henry's four-year stint in Major League Soccer.

Having forged a reputation as an industrious ball-winning defensive midfielder, Adams moved to NYRB's sister club RB Leipzig in 2019, making his biggest splash when he fired in the goal that lifted the Bundesliga club into the Champions League semi-finals. When he landed at Leeds in a £20m transfer this summer, it fulfilled a lifelong dream that not even his success in Germany could match.

"The Bundesliga wasn't the biggest thing for me when I was growing up," he said. "You saw a lot of quality players on the pitch at the same time [in the Premier League], no matter which teams were playing.

"I remember telling my mom at a young age that I wanted to play in England. The culture is not too far off what America has to offer, so definitely that transition has been a lot easier than playing in Germany. But there's something special about the Premier League. There always has been and I think there always will be."

The USA coach, Gregg Berhalter, who on Monday became the first person to play for and manage an American side at a World Cup, came of age at a time when finding Premier League matches on American television was all but impossible. Only when he was in the Netherlands during the 1990s at the outset of a 15-year playing career in Europe was he exposed to the Premier League on a regular basis.

"I remember when I was in Holland getting home from my games on Saturday watching Match of the Day on BBC, and that was the only real highlights you got," Berhalter said. "And now, every Saturday morning in America, waking up to watching the Premier League and seeing all the fan festivals they're having. Everyone now in America seems to have a team that they support.

"It's an incredible league. We're really proud to have our players playing in that league."

Adams, who is the youngest captain of the 32 squads in Qatar by some distance, is also the youngest player to wear the skipper's armband for a US team at the World Cup since Walter Bahr in 1950 - a tournament where the Americans famously bucked the odds with a 1-0 upset of England in Belo Horizonte.

As the United States have rebuilt from the wreckage of their catastrophic failure to qualify for the World Cup four years ago, Adams has made no secret of this group's goal of changing the way the world perceives American soccer. An inspired performance in tonight's match could go a long way to making it happen.

"It's obviously a huge opportunity to fast-track the impact that we can have," Adams said. "These are the games where the pressure is a privilege to step on the field against some of these guys. We respect them. There's probably a mutual respect between both teams. And when you get a result in a game like this, people start to respect Americans a little bit more."


Tyler Adams was a big admirer of Thierry Henry while growing up

The matches



Group A

Group A	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Ecuador	1	1	0	0	2	0	+2	3
Netherlands	1	1	0	0	2	0	+2	3
Senegal	1	0	0	1	0	2	-2	0
Qatar	1	0	0	1	0	2	-2	0

Qatar 0 **Ecuador** 2
Valencia 16pen 31

Senegal 0 **Netherlands** 2
Gakpo 84
Klaassen 90

Qatar v Senegal — Today, Al Thumama — BBC, 1pm
Netherlands v Ecuador — Today, Khalifa International — ITV, 4pm
Ecuador v Senegal — Tue 29 Nov, Khalifa International — ITV, 3pm
Netherlands v Qatar — Tue 29 Nov, Al Bayt — ITV, 3pm

Group B

Group B	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
England	1	1	0	0	6	2	+4	3
USA	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Wales	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Iran	1	0	0	1	2	6	-4	0

England 6 **Iran** 2
Bellingham 35, Saka 43 62, Sterling 45, Rashford 71, Grealish 89 — Taremi 65 90pen

USA 1 **Wales** 1
Weah 36 — Bale 82pen

Wales v Iran — Today, Ahmad bin Ali — BBC, S4C, 10am
England v USA — Today, Al Bayt — ITV, 7pm
Iran v USA — Tue 29 Nov, Al Thumama — BBC, 7pm
Wales v England — Tue 29 Nov, Ahmad bin Ali — BBC, S4C, 7pm

Group C

Group C	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Saudi Arabia	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	3
Poland	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Mexico	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Argentina	1	0	0	1	1	2	-1	0

Argentina 1 **Saudi Arabia** 2
Messi 10pen — Al-Shehri 48, Al-Dawsari 53

Mexico 0 **Poland** 0

Poland v Saudi Arabia — Tomorrow, Education City — ITV, 1pm
Argentina v Mexico — Tomorrow, Lusail — ITV, 7pm
Poland v Argentina — Wed 30 Nov, Stadium 974 — BBC, 7pm
Saudi Arabia v Mexico — Wed 30 Nov, Lusail — BBC, 7pm

Group D

Group D	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
France	1	1	0	0	4	1	+3	3
Tunisia	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Denmark	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Australia	1	0	0	1	1	4	-3	0

Denmark 0 **Tunisia** 0

France 4 **Australia** 1
Rabiot 27, Giroud 32 71, Mbappé 68 — Goodwin 9

Tunisia v Australia — Tomorrow, Al Janoub — BBC, 10am
France v Denmark — Tomorrow, Stadium 974 — ITV, 4pm
Australia v Denmark — Wed 30 Nov, Al Janoub — BBC, 3pm
Tunisia v France — Wed 30 Nov, Education City — BBC, 3pm

Group E

Group E	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Spain	1	1	0	0	7	0	+7	3
Japan	1	1	0	0	2	1	+1	3
Germany	1	0	0	1	1	2	-1	0
Costa Rica	1	0	0	1	0	7	-7	0

Germany 1 **Japan** 2
Gündogan 33pen — Doan 75, Asano 83

Spain 7 **Costa Rica** 0
Olmo 11, Asensio 21, Torres 31pen 54, Gavi 74, Soler 90, Morata 90

Japan v Costa Rica — Sun 27 Nov, Ahmad bin Ali — ITV, 10am
Spain v Germany — Sun 27 Nov, Al Bayt — BBC, 7pm
Japan v Spain — Thu 1 Dec, Khalifa International — ITV, 7pm
Costa Rica v Germany — Thu 1 Dec, Al Bayt — ITV, 7pm

Group F

Group F	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Belgium	1	1	0	0	1	0	+1	3
Croatia	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Morocco	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Canada	1	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0

Morocco 0 **Croatia** 0

Belgium 1 **Canada** 0
Batshuayi 44

Belgium v Morocco — Sun 27 Nov, Al Thumama — BBC, 1pm
Croatia v Canada — Sun 27 Nov, Khalifa International — BBC, 4pm
Croatia v Belgium — Thu 1 Dec, Ahmad bin Ali — BBC, 3pm
Canada v Morocco — Thu 1 Dec, Al Thumama — BBC, 3pm

Group G

Group G	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Brazil	1	1	0	0	2	0	+2	3
Switzerland	1	1	0	0	1	0	+1	3
Cameroon	1	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0
Serbia	1	0	0	1	0	2	-2	0

Switzerland 1 **Cameroon** 0
Embolo 48

Brazil 2 **Serbia** 0
Richarlison 62 73

Cameroon v Serbia — Mon 28 Nov, Al Janoub — ITV, 10am
Brazil v Switzerland — Mon 28 Nov, Stadium 974 — ITV, 4pm
Serbia v Switzerland — Fri 2 Dec, Stadum 974 — ITV, 7pm
Cameroon v Brazil — Fri 2 Dec, Lusail — ITV, 7pm

Group H

Group H	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Portugal	1	1	0	0	3	2	+1	3
South Korea	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Uruguay	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Ghana	1	0	0	1	2	3	-1	0

Uruguay 0 **South Korea** 0

Portugal 3 **Ghana** 2
Ronaldo 65pen, Félix 78, Rafael Leão 80 — A Ayew 73, Bukari 89

South Korea v Ghana — Mon 28 Nov, Education City — BBC, 1pm
Portugal v Uruguay — Mon 28 Nov, Lusail — ITV, 7pm
Ghana v Uruguay — Fri 2 Dec, Al Janoub — BBC, 3pm
South Korea v Portugal — Fri 2 Dec, Education City — BBC, 3pm

Teams level on points are separated by goal difference, then goals scored. If still level, then on a head-to-head basis, first points, then goal difference, then goals scored. After that, fair play, and finally by the drawing of lots.

Quarter-finals

57 W49 v W50 — Fri 9 Dec, Lusail — tbc, 7pm
58 W53 v W54 — Fri 9 Dec, Education City — tbc, 3pm
59 W51 v W52 — Sat 10 Dec, Al Bayt — tbc, 7pm
60 W55 v W56 — Sat 10 Dec, Al Thumama — tbc, 3pm

Semi-finals

61 W57 v W58 — Tue 13 Dec, Lusail — tbc, 7pm
62 W59 v W60 — Wed 14 Dec, Al Bayt — tbc, 7pm

Last 16

49 1A v 2B — Sat 3 Dec, Khalifa International — tbc, 3pm
50 1C v 2D — Sat 3 Dec, Ahmad bin Ali — tbc, 7pm
51 1B v 2A — Sun 4 Dec, Al Bayt — tbc, 7pm
52 1D v 2C — Sun 4 Dec, Al Thurama — tbc, 31pm
53 1E v 2F — Mon 5 Dec, Al Janoub — tbc, 3pm
54 1G v 2H — Mon 5 Dec, Stadium 974 — tbc, 7pm
55 1F v 2E — Tue 6 Dec, Education City — tbc, 3pm
56 1H v 2G — Tue 6 Dec, Lusail — tbc, 7pm

Third place playoff

L61 v L62 — Sat 17 Dec, Khalifa International — tbc, 3pm

Final

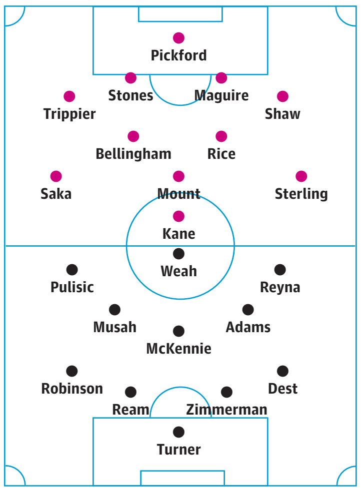
W61
v
W62
Sun 18 Dec
Lusail, 3pm
BBC/ITV



England

USA

Today 7pm **Group B**



England
Subs from Ramsdale, Pope, Walker, White, Alexander-Arnold, Dier, Coady, Henderson, Phillips, Gallagher, Maddison, Grealish, Rashford, Foden, Wilson
Doubtful Maddison
Injured None

USA
Subs from Horvath, Johnson, Long, Moore, Carter-Vickers, Yedlin, Scally, Aaronson, De la Torre, Roldan, Acosta, Ferreira, Morris, Wright, Sargent
Doubtful McKennie, Musah
Injured None

one booking from suspension *(probable teams)*

Venue Al Bayt Stadium
Referee Jesús Valenzuela (Ven)

Last two meetings

England 3 USA 0
Trent Alexander-Arnold and Callum Wilson found the net in the 2018 friendly at Wembley

England 1 USA 1
Clint Dempsey's goal earned a point for the USA at the 2010 World Cup in South Africa

Key clash

Harry Kane v Tim Ream
There were some doubts over the England captain's fitness but he is expected to come up against a familiar face in the 35-year-old defender from Fulham.



Managers

Gareth Southgate
Takes charge of England for the 78th time and ninth at a World Cup

Gregg Berhalter
Another former Crystal Palace defender who has been in charge of USA since 2018

Weather 25°

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theguardian.com Join Scott Murray from 6pm for minute-by-minute coverage of the game



Southgate lauds strength in depth as Kane recovers

Captain fit to face USA, who manager believes will provide a tougher test than their first opponents, Iran

David Hytner
Doha

When Harry Kane discovered the full extent of a hamstring tear in January 2020 - extremely serious, surgery needed, months out of action - the reaction of José Mourinho, his Tottenham manager at the time, was pithy and colourful. It would be shown in the Amazon documentary on the club's season. "Woe is us. We will surely not recover from this setback." Or words to that effect.

Mourinho felt that Kane carried Spurs and the same has been suggested by Pep Guardiola, the Manchester City manager. Everybody remembers "the Harry Kane team" discourse.

There is no doubt that Kane is fundamental to Gareth Southgate's England. To lose him would be the manager's biggest nightmare and it was easy to feel the fretting back home when the news emerged on Tuesday night that Kane was set for a scan on his right foot. He had been caught by a bad tackle in England's opening World Cup match against Iran on Monday.

The good news is that the captain is fine. It was merely precautionary. The cameras were waiting for him yesterday lunchtime at England's training base in Al Wakrah and it was reassuring to see him play his part in the session.

During a one-touch passing drill early on - so intense inside a small space - he stretched to reach a seemingly impossible ball, diverting it with his right boot to a teammate in an almost unnatural motion.

If we are honest, and Southgate certainly was, nobody wants to test the theories about Kane's worth, to see how England might fare without him. Not now at the very biggest tournament, with the second group game against the USA looming large tonight.

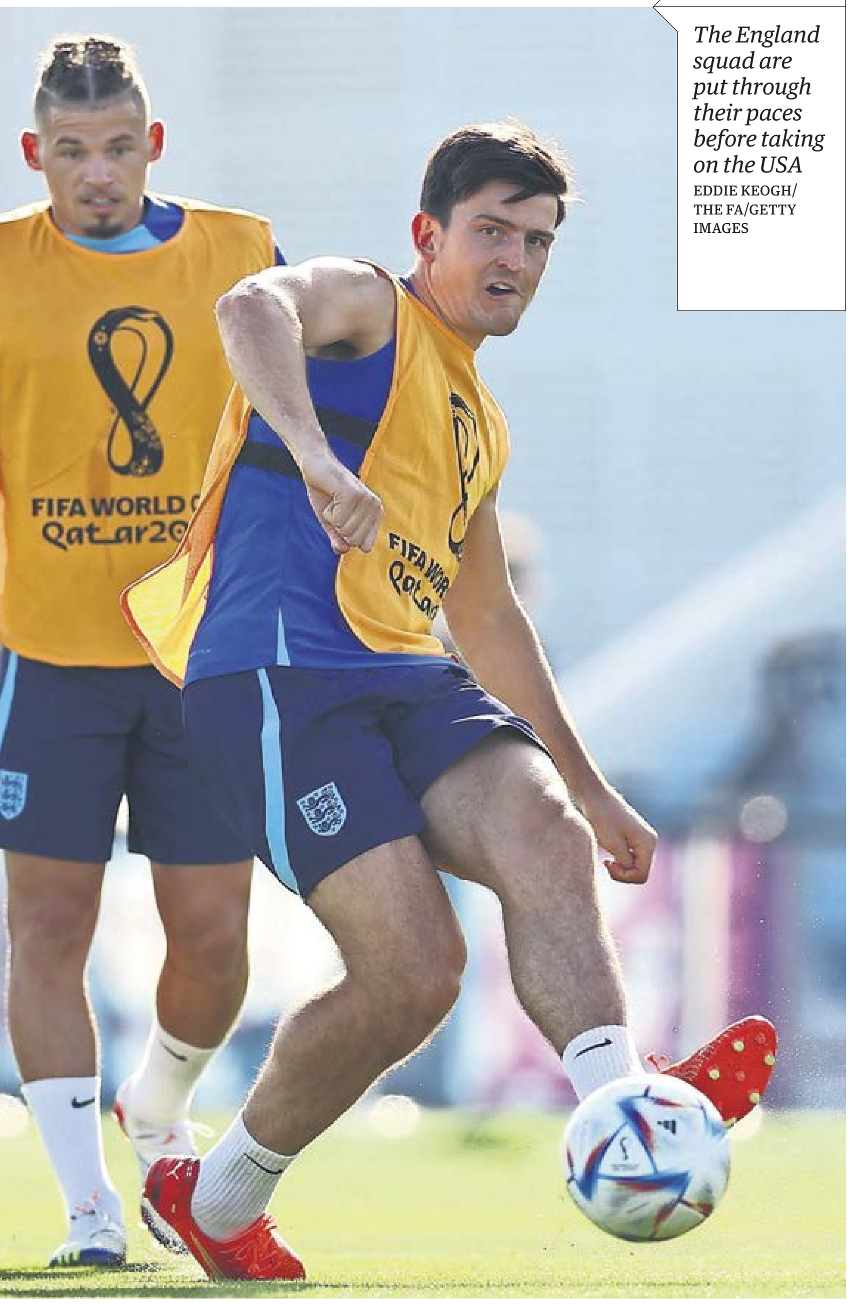
Equally Southgate was sure that, if the worst did come to the worst at any point over the coming weeks, he would be able to cope. With the matches at these finals elongated by extraordinary amounts of stoppage-time - the USA's draw against Wales on Monday night finished on Tuesday - there is a greater emphasis on strength in depth. It is here, when Southgate considers his attacking options, that he is emboldened.

"Harry is a special player," Southgate said. "Everybody will focus on his goals but the quality of his buildup play against Iran, [with the assists] for Raheem Sterling and Marcus Rashford, was exceptional." Could England survive without Kane? "I guess at the highest level, that has yet to be proved. What we've tried to do from the very start was not put all the onus on the captain, whether that's media duties or whatever else - spread the load, give people more responsibility. We have now got more depth.

"I see more of our attacking players in a better moment than they were in the Euros perhaps. I know people talked a lot about the depth we had then but I didn't see for some of the squad then that they were in a really good moment when you were looking to make changes. There were some but not all."

On the face of it Southgate's attacking options have not changed much from Euro 2020. But he

> *'Harry is a special player. The quality of his buildup play against Iran was exceptional'*



Preparing for battle of the Atlantic

The England squad are put through their paces before taking on the USA
EDDIE KEOGH/ THE FA/GETTY IMAGES

England's soft centre remains manager's biggest headache

Jacob Steinberg
Doha

There is always room for improvement. The mood in the England camp is high after their 6-2 victory over Iran on Monday but nobody is resting on laurels.

There is an awareness that sterner tests lie in wait, starting with tonight's meeting with a speedy and inventive USA side, and much of the focus this week has been on correcting the defensive sloppiness that gifted Iran two second-half goals.

That dip in concentration has been on Gareth Southgate's mind. It was a reminder not to get carried away and it gave weight to the idea that the biggest impediment to England's chances of winning the World Cup is their defence.

That England kept five clean sheets during Euro 2020 has been forgotten. The worries over Harry Maguire's club struggles have not been fully allayed by his performance against Iran. There was a flicker of concern when he lost Mehdi Taremi before the striker fired his first goal past Jordan Pickford, who was angry at being denied a clean sheet, and it remains to be seen whether Southgate trusts Maguire and John Stones to flourish in a back four against the very best.

The consensus is that England's favoured centre-back pairing have it all to prove. The fear is that Stones and Maguire will not be enough if England come up against France or Brazil during the latter stages, convincing Southgate to ditch the 4-3-3 that destroyed Iran and bring Kyle Walker in as a third centre-back.

The debate is ceaseless. On the one hand there is the argument England will not be playing to their strengths if they sacrifice an attacker; on the other it is easy to understand why Southgate tends to feel more comfortable having Walker's pace against the top sides.

"It's good that we are versatile and able to go from a four to a five," Stones said. "Our thought process is: 'How are the opposition going to set up? How are they going to attack, have certain movements and styles of play? How are we going to counteract that and beat that?' If it's a four or a five - in the Euros we even switched in games and did it well - whatever system we play, we are comfortable."

All of which was very on-message. Only, Stones has spent the past six years playing for Manchester City. The 28-year-old can call himself one of the best defenders in Europe, has won four Premier League titles and can be forgiven for taking issue with the notion England would have to retreat if they face Kylian Mbappé, Neymar and Vinícius Júnior.

Stones said he and Maguire would not necessarily need to play in a back three against Brazil and France. "But, if we come up against those teams, it would be down to the manager and us having to adapt to a new system because of the qualities they bring to the game and how we can counteract that."



Gareth Southgate may have to change tactics against the top nations

All the same England have kept two clean sheets in 2022. There can not be a repeat of the unfocused end to the Iran game against the US, who have a fast and tricky attack.

"It was annoying," Stones said. "I'm frustrated with myself because of how well we've done in previous tournaments with keeping clean sheets and being solid. We've gone over the footage and will again, just to refresh my mind. The overriding feeling was what we did was amazing and those small details that led up to those goals we just need to brush up on."

One concern for Stones is how VAR is operating. He remains baffled he gave away a penalty against Iran for a slight tug of Morteza Pouraliganji's shirt. The frustration was compounded by the failure of the officials to award Stones and Maguire spot-kicks when they were hauled over earlier.

"I know Harry got highlighted in that first instance but I'm not one for going down and I was straight up appealing for a penalty," Stones said. "I didn't even realise Harry had been having the same thing. I'm a bit baffled nothing had been called and then it was for something that, in my opinion, was never, ever, ever a penalty.

"I'm not one for conceding silly fouls and I don't believe that with the amount of jostling that goes on in a box, a little pull of the shirt makes someone's knees buckle and go over. There has got to be consistency to it."

England will need to be careful. "We know what we've got to do right and we know we risk being punished for certain things," Southgate said. "For all the teams there is a worry when you're not quite sure what's going to be given."

The quest for perfection is on. "I think I can always be better," Stones said. "But football is a difficult game and I don't think you'll go through one without making mistakes. It's striving for perfection, which I don't think will be achieved. But that's the goal."

'Decision was taken out of Kane's hands'

Continued *from back page*

moment by walking on to the pitch with the armband and receiving an instant booking are misplaced. The yellow card would have been shown in the dressing room, stripping away any potential symbolism.

Southgate, speaking before today's game against the USA, was asked about the threat of sanctions for Kane. "I don't know all the ins and outs because I wasn't in the meeting but there was definitely a feel there were sanctions and not all of those were really clear, I think, so the decision was taken out of the hands of Harry," England's head coach said.

"The decision from the organisation was: 'We're not even putting the armband in the dressing room.' There is no discussion. The player had no say."

Germany's players were praised for covering their mouths with their hands to suggest they had been gagged by Fifa before their game against Japan on Wednesday. Six players, including the captain, Manuel Neuer, also wore Adidas boots with rainbow stitching, and the squad sported tops with rainbow colours on their sleeves in the warm-up.

Germany have faced no punishment from Fifa but Southgate questioned whether there would be any value in England mounting a similar form of protest today.

"I'm quite comfortable with our position and I think we should be confident in what we stand for," Southgate said. "There was a plan - we weren't able to carry out that plan. What do we do now? Do we all try to outdo each other on a gesture that, however we do it, probably won't be enough.

"We want to support the LGBTQ community in particular and recognise that a lot of those people aren't here with us, and we wanted them here with us. But we could also rush into doing things that don't really make any difference.

"I understand that is going to be uncomfortable for people because I could be criticised, the captain has been criticised, the organisation will be criticised. I'm very comfortable with what I stand for, and how I deal with people every day of my life is more important than a statement that might land well and might not."

Kane trained yesterday and will start tonight after an injury scare. Southgate indicated that England, who would seal progress from Group B by beating the USA, will name an unchanged side against Gregg Berhalter's team. James Maddison is still recovering from a knee injury.

believes they have. This time he has James Maddison rather than Jadon Sancho, and Callum Wilson rather than Dominic Calvert-Lewin. The other attackers are the same.

Maddison and Wilson were selected on the back of fine club form, although the former has been hampered by a knee injury. He did not train again yesterday. But Wilson was able to make a difference when he came on against Iran, setting up a goal for another substitute, Jack Grealish, with an unselfish assist.

Southgate takes heart from how Grealish, Bukayo Saka and Phil Foden are older and wiser from their experiences at the Euros. Then there is Rashford, who is plainly in far better form, as shown in the way. he seized his moment when he entered against Iran, scoring within seconds. His name had not even been announced over the PA system.

It all feeds into the collective belief before facing the USA, whom England have never beaten at a World Cup. There was the 1-1 against them in 2010, scarred by Rob Green's goalkeeping error, and before that the notorious 1-0 defeat in 1950 - considered to be among England's greatest humiliations.

Southgate believes the US will provide a tougher test than Iran, mainly because they have better players who will press harder and from cuter angles. The intensity will be higher and England will find it more difficult to build the play and break them down. The US are also likely to be a bigger threat on the counterattack.

What Southgate was perfectly clear about was that there would be no over-confidence from his team. "Have we ever beaten the States at a major tournament?" he asked. "No. We are good at talking highly of ourselves as a nation on the basis of very little evidence. We've got to perform on the pitch."

Southgate has called for a psychological reset, for his players to park the emotions from the Iran game, and yet the requirement is for more of the same - without the small number of defensive errors. Southgate said that Harry Maguire had been withdrawn against Iran because he was dehydrated - he is now OK - and it would be a surprise if the manager changed his starting XI.

"It's always the dilemma," Southgate said. "On the one hand the team have earned the right to go again and there's something important about a meritocracy where, if I've played well, I've earned the right to go again. Then there is: 'Are they all ready to go again and is that the right decision?' There are other guys who are raring to go."

Whichever way he slices it, Southgate believes he has the answers.

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Friday 25 November 2022

Sport

Record breaker
Ronaldo's moment of history in thriller with Ghana *Page 44* →



Elis James
For Wales fans the World Cup is bleak and brilliant *Page 49* →

Saudi swoop?
Minister keen on 'private sector bids' for United and Liverpool
Page 43 →



World Cup 2022

Brazil have liftoff thanks to Richarlison

Brazil	Serbia
2	0

Richarlison steals the show for Brazil with a spectacular second goal against Serbia
Report and analysis *Page 46* →

LAURENT GILLIÉRON/EPA

Armband 'blackmail' by Fifa
FAs cancelled protests over fears of 'unlimited liability'

Jacob Steinberg
Doha

England, Wales and five other European nations feared their captains would be exposed to "unlimited liability" and would have faced suspensions if they had defied Fifa's banning of the pro-diversity OneLove armband during the World Cup.

Despite facing criticism for backing down after coming under pressure from Fifa, the English Football Association's options were limited by concerns that the sporting sanctions for Harry Kane could have been worse than an instant booking if the captain had worn the armband against Iran. There were also fears that Gareth Southgate's side could have been prevented from entering the field.



The FA took the decision that Harry Kane would not wear the armband

The FA's worries were shared by the other six countries involved in the OneLove campaign after talks with world football's governing body, with those close to the process left with the impression that "Fifa could do anything" to any captain who wore the armband in Qatar.

The German federation has described Fifa's behaviour as "extreme blackmail" and sources have indicated there was no clarity over whether the captains would merely receive a caution.

England, Wales, Belgium, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark feared their captains could be banned. It was unclear whether any suspension would be limited to one match. None of the countries were prepared to put their players in that position. A source said that the captains would have risked "unlimited liability" if they had defied Fifa's warnings.

Separately the FA was concerned that England's game against Iran would not have started if Kane had tried to leave the dressing room with the armband. The FA is exploring if it will be legally possible to challenge the threat of sporting sanctions, and there has been fury within the seven associations about Fifa's behaviour.

Suggestions that Kane could have created an iconic 53 →

Iran singled out by media, complains angry Queiroz

Ben Fisher
Doha

The Iran manager, Carlos Queiroz, confronted a journalist at the end of a media conference after taking umbrage at politics again dominating the discourse in the buildup to today's match with Wales. In an animated exchange Queiroz suggested his peers should face similar questions, taking the extraordinary step of asking the BBC journalist Shaimaa Khalil why the England manager, Gareth Southgate, is spared questions about the war in Afghanistan.

During the press conference Queiroz reiterated the importance of press freedom but made it clear that he felt it was time for other managers to be asked about wider issues in the world, saying it was "strange" his rivals avoided such questions. Afterwards he took the BBC journalist to task before being shepherded out of the room. "Why don't you ask the other coaches?" Queiroz said. "Why don't you ask Southgate: 'What do you think about England and the United States that left Afghanistan and all the women alone?'"

Queiroz was unhappy that Khalil asked the Iran striker Mehdi Taremi whether he had a message for those who are protesting against their government after the death of the 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in police custody in September. Iran's players did not sing their national anthem before their 6-2 defeat by England on Monday in apparent support for protesters.

Khalil asked Taremi: "Your fans have been here cheering for you, your fans are back home cheering for you, there are also people on the street, what is your message for protesters back on the street in Iran?"

Taremi said the Iran squad were under no pressure to sing the anthem after suggestions they could face reprisals if they stay silent before kick-off against Wales today and the USA on 48 →



▲ *Carlos Queiroz: 'Why don't you ask Southgate about Afghanistan?'*





20 simple recipes to try your hand at this Christmas

Christmas doesn't need to be complicated. We've handpicked 20 perfect baking recipes guaranteed to impress without causing a meltdown in the kitchen. Wow your friends, family and party guests with walnut biscuits, candy cane cookies or Nigella Lawson's decadent sticky toffee pudding. We've got Christmas covered.

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New direction? Step this way!



Kelela
The return of a radical superstar

The Guardian G2

Friday 25/11/22

Film & Music

Hadley Freeman
'Keanu made me crumple'
page 6

Platinum Bond
Daniel Craig films – ranked!
page 2



Ranked! Daniel Craig films

As Glass Onion is released, we rate the former Bond's best work. By Andrew Pulver



1
Skyfall *(2012)*
Although it's often hard to locate actual human feeling among the cacophony of a Bond movie – the blaring soundtrack chords, overpowering light pollution, the thunderous detonations – it all came together in Craig's third go at the 007 role. Framed around his re-entry into espionage after being presumed dead, Skyfall's great coup is its last half hour, when Bond kidnaps M and heads north to his childhood home in the Highlands.

2
The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo *(2011)*
David Fincher's high-powered remake of the Swedish hacker-noir thriller saw Craig take one of his increasingly adventurous forays, as journalist-investigator Mikael Blomkvist looking into the mysterious disappearance of wealthy tycoon Henrik Vanger's grandniece.

3
Logan Lucky *(2017)*
Craig might have been amusing in Knives Out, but he was actively hilarious in Steven Soderbergh's racetrack heist, equipped with an even more preposterous accent. Bust out of the slammer by brothers Channing Tatum and Adam Driver, Craig plays an explosives expert adorned with a blond buzzcut who goes by the princely moniker of Joe Bang. Brilliant.

4


Knives Out *(2019)*
As the end of his time as 007 got ever nearer, Craig could afford to stretch his legs a little, and opted to head a stellar ensemble cast for Rian Johnson's Massachusetts-set answer to Agatha Christie. As private detective Benoit Blanc, this wasn't the first time that Craig would grapple with a preposterous accent, and he manages to be pretty funny among all the narrative ins and outs.

5
Casino Royale *(2006)*
Craig blasted away Bond's cobwebs within his first moments, bringing a much heralded "darkness" to the role. (In practice, this meant him battering an enemy contact to death in a toilet in a black-and-white flashback.) It's hard to credit now the waves of negative pre-publicity – NoBlondeBond and all that – but Craig carried it off with aplomb.



6
Love Is the Devil: Study for a Portrait of Francis Bacon *(1998)*
Craig had an early success in John Maybury's biopic of the celebrated painter as the East End villain George Dyer, whom Bacon (played by Derek Jacobi) entices into his bed after he tries to rob Bacon's studio. Maybury went all out to conjure up Bacon-style pictorial effects.

7
Layer Cake *(2004)*
In the 00s, British cinema was obsessed with remaking GoodFellas, and this is one of the best attempts: Craig parachutes in as a super-suave cocaine supplier sucked into various gang wars between major crime lords. Orchestrated with considerable flash by director Matthew Vaughn.

8
The Mother *(2003)*
Craig began to accrue some serious movie-star momentum with this Hanif Kureishi-scripted drama, as a carpenter who starts an affair with his girlfriend's widowed mother. Though the focus is very much on Anne Reid's sixtysomething May, Craig plays a T-shirted hunk who is, erm, extremely good with his hands. Craig was now well on his way to stardom.



9
Some Voices *(2000)*
Craig first caught the eye on TV in Our Friends in the North, but he made his bones as a leading man in this little-seen drama from the very patchy Britflick era of the late 90s and early 00s. Furnished with a somewhat unlikely bottle-blond haircut, Craig gives it his all as Ray, on medication for schizophrenia, who strikes up a relationship with Glaswegian Kelly Macdonald.

10
Infamous *(2006)*
Craig plays Perry Smith, one of the convicted killers in the In Cold Blood murders, as memorialised by Truman Capote. The exact nature of Smith and Capote's relationship is disputed, but here, the dynamic between them has incredibly high stakes.



See full list of 20 at theguardian.com/film

Playlist



1 **Billy Nomates**
Spite
Much of the Bristol punk's new album is mellower than her earlier material, but Tor Marie (above) proceeds with chin firmly jutted out on Spite, a vindictive new-wave F-U.

2 **Bad Boy Chiller Crew ft Local**
Jürgen Kropper
A decidedly unofficial World Cup anthem from the Bradford trio. The vibes are high, the lyrics nonsense, and the incessant bassline will sound great booming out of your house at 3am.

3 **Rozi Plain**
Help
The Bristol songwriter follows elusive feelings like feathers bounding on a breeze in this warm, puckish hum of a song, dappled with soft piano and barely there brass.

4 **Tamera**
Insensitive
This begins with the London musician admitting she's not been the greatest to her man, before the self-possessed chorus suggests she's not *that* sorry.

5 **Roy Montgomery**
In Mutual Flux
The New Zealand guitarist's latest is dedicated to his late wife: the title track is a classic Montgomery tundra of sound, comforting and anguished. Fans of Rhys Chatham, listen up.

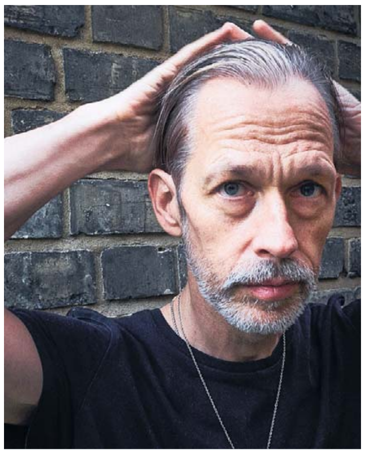
6 **Somadina**
Citrus Tears
This skeletal, unhurried alté song features magma-hot lyrics delivered with an impossibly cool countenance; it's barely more than guitar and vocals, but Somadina fills the room.

7 **Nuha Ruby Ra**
Self Portraiture
A disorientating squall of no-wave navel gazing and industrial grind anchored by an academic and borderline nonsensical spoken-word monologue. Trippy, tense experimentalism.

PHOTOGRAPH: KOBAL/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK
COVER PHOTOGRAPH: JUSTIN FRENCH

The reader interview
‘We beat Radiohead at football 25-4’

Andy Bell of Ride answers your questions on Creation Records, playing bass for Oasis and being mistaken for Erasure



PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREE MARTIS

Have you ever pretended to be the Erasure frontman to get a better table in a restaurant? *TeeDubyaBee*
No, but Andy and I have a brilliant little friendship that’s developed over Twitter after people started tagging the wrong one. I’d tweet funny replies, like “I wish I had a little respect …” A couple of years ago I reached out to him for something which unfortunately he wasn’t able to do, but he said he’d be up for something and we are talking about working together. You read it here first.

Rumour has it that the Creation Records HQ in Hackney was some kind of crazy blend of student bedsit/messy office/nightclub. Did you wonder what you were letting yourself in for? *Timwthornton*
When we signed they were in Bethnal Green, in what Alan [McGee, the founder] called the bunker, accessible via a sort of sweatshop where women with sewing machines were making clothes. One of the first times I went in, there was a party going on and someone from Primal Scream phoned to say that [producer] Andrew Weatherall wanted them to play to a click track, and they went: “What’s a click track?” It must have worked because the results were Loaded and Screamadelica. We’d signed after six gigs so I was like a kid, watching this spectacle. Magic times.

I always felt that a guitarist and songwriter of your talent was wasted playing bass in Oasis. Did it ever feel like that? *ScorchTheBlueDragon*
That’s rude to bass players. Not at all. I learned so much about music as a guitarist playing bass. Plus, it was lovely to be asked to join in with songwriting. My song Turn Up the Sun was the opening number for a whole tour. It even broke a barrier in the Manchester City stadium, when the crowd rushed forward. Luckily I don’t think anyone was injured badly.

You came to the rescue of Oasis (and Gay Dad) when they were short of crucial players, and loaned prize guitar to Noel Gallagher and Gem Archer. In your career, who has shown the most kindness and generosity to you? *david99b*
Robert Smith from the Cure. When Ride were getting started, he used his influence to get us added to the bill for a TV programme called Brits 91, so we got this amazing prime-time exposure. Since then, he’s asked us to support the Cure, got us added to festival bills and he did a great remix of Vapour Trail. He’s always been there to encourage with a very giving spirit.

Tell us a Brian Jonestown Massacre story. *ShermanMLight*
In Stockholm once I was watching from the side of the stage when Anton [Newcombe] sacked the drummer during the gig. I drunkenly jumped up and started playing drums. He didn’t chuck me off, which was nice of him. Before their gig in Oxford a few years back I mentioned that I once saw Spacemen 3 playing in armchairs. Anton immediately went into overdrive. “Man, [Ride’s] Mark Gardener is coming to the gig tonight. I’m gonna get you guys armchairs and we’re gonna have the Ride reunion on stage.” Mark and I hadn’t spoken for years, and suddenly we were sat in armchairs for the entirety of their gig, asking each other: “How’s it going?”

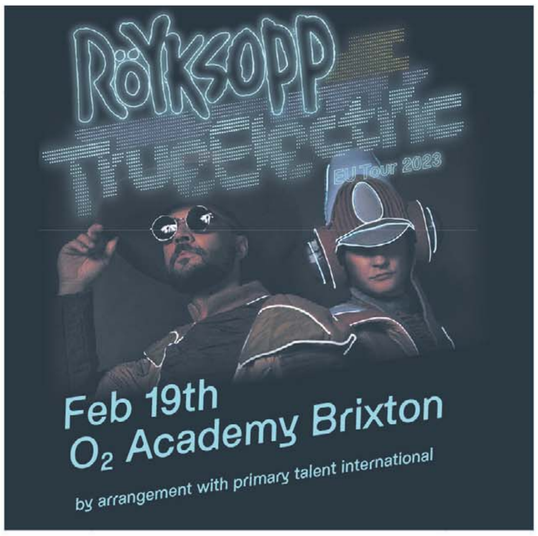
Please tell us about the infamous Ride v Radiohead five-a-side match. *Stuartyellow*
I’m not a footballer, so wasn’t in our team, but we beat them 25-4 or something. You know, they might be playing stadiums around the world, but ours was the real victory.
As told to Dave Simpson
Andy Bell’s new solo EP, The Grounding Process, is out now on Sonic Cathedral. Reissues of Ride’s classic early albums and EPs are also out now on Wichita.

Send us your questions for next week’s interviewee
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Vangarde, who now lives in a remote fishing village in Brazil

Daddy cool

The legend behind songs such as D.I.S.C.O. – and the father of half of Daft Punk – ruled the 70s, then vanished. As his eclectic tracks are reissued, Daniel Vangarde talks to **Alexis Petridis**

Almost the first thing Daniel Vangarde says when he walks into the Paris office of his record label is that he has never done an interview in English before. Then again, he adds, he had never done an interview in his native French either until this morning. He never bothered talking to journalists at the height of his career, when he was a key figure in French pop: an artist, writer and producer behind an array of releases that range from the wildly obscure to the instantly familiar. And he certainly wasn't expecting to start meeting the press aged 75: Vangarde had retired years ago, relocating to a remote fishing village in northern Brazil.

But then a record company approached him about a career-spanning compilation, named after Zagora, the label he founded in 1974, which piqued his interest. When they sent him the track listing, he told them some of the songs on it weren't his. They were – he'd just forgotten them entirely.

At least part of the renewed interest in Vangarde's career is down to the success of his son, Thomas Bangalter, until recently one half of Daft Punk. It's ironic given that hearing Daft Punk was one of the reasons Vangarde gave up making music in the first place: "I thought, this is the new generation coming and it will be difficult to compete."

But Vangarde's career is fascinating in its own right. It began with a bullish teenage plan to break into the music industry by simply writing to the Beatles and suggesting they let him join – "I was sure I could bring something to them," he chuckles – and ended in the early 90s with Vangarde retiring in disgust after a series of bitter arguments with the French music industry.

In between, he pursued a career which was nothing if not diverse. At one extreme, he wrote protest songs deemed so subversive they were banned: his eponymous 1975 solo album came to commercial grief as a result of its lead single, Un Bombardier Avec Ses Bombes, an attack on France's role in the international arms trade. "The big honour I had was that I did one television appearance and then it was censored in France," he says. "Even today, you cannot talk about that subject."

At the other, he was the mastermind behind the Bouzouki Disco Band, whose oeuvre was noticeably lacking in attacks on the military-industrial complex: as their name suggests, they dealt exclusively in Hellenic-themed disco tracks with names like Ouzo et Retsina and Greek Girls. His CV also takes in huge international pop successes – Vangarde and his long-term collaborator Jean Kluger were behind late-70s hitmakers the Gibson Brothers and Ottawan, of D.I.S.C.O. and Hands Up (Give Me Your Heart) infamy – as well as fantastic cosmic disco released under the names Starbow and Who's Who, and obscure Japanese-themed funk rock concept albums beloved of today's crate-diggers.

> **I did one TV performance and then my song was banned in France**

The contents of 1971's Le Monde Fabuleux des Yamasuki, have, as Vangarde puts it, "become a little bit fashionable" in recent years: the album has been sampled by Erykah Badu, included on an Arctic Monkeys-curated mix album and featured on the soundtrack of the TV series Fargo. It was remarkably ahead of its time: a mad, cartoonish blend of different musical cultures that also attempted to provoke what would now be called a "dance challenge" (the album's cover comes complete with instructions on how to do the steps).

Vangarde was always interested in music outside the standard western pop canon. "I like to travel, I like exotic instruments, I listen a little to the Beatles, the Beach Boys, Stevie Wonder, but most of the music I love is African music, Arabic music, reggae," he says.

He worked across a variety of genres – he reworked a track from the Yamasuki album in Swahili as Aie A Mwana, subsequently covered by, of all people, Bananarama – but it was disco that really turned his head, his mind blown after hearing Chic's Le Freak in a Parisian club. Moreover, it was a genre that didn't share the era's traditionally dismissive Anglo-American attitude to French pop. Vangarde thrived, as did his countrymen Space and Voyage. "There were no prejudices in disco, I think because its audience had experienced prejudice – it was Black, it was gay. They were not in the position of being snobs."



Vangarde with the Gibson Brothers

In fact, he loved disco so much that when the backlash happened, he felt impelled to act in the genre's defence: to hear him tell it, Ottawan's deathless wedding party anthem D.I.S.C.O. is effectively a protest song. "It was the time when they were burning the disco records in the US, and I felt crazy that people said this will stop: it's a rhythm, you can't stop people dancing to a rhythm. So I said we'll do a song about disco to show that's not over. And the rhythm didn't stop," he adds, triumphantly. "Because what is techno? A continuation of disco."

For all his pop success and tolerance for a cheesy novelty song, Vangarde was always a curiously unbiddable figure, wont to turn down high-profile production jobs if he liked the artist too much, as in the case of reggae stars Third World or salsa supergroup the Fania All-Stars. "I didn't want to be involved, I just wanted to be a listener, I didn't want to lose that magic."

Just how unbiddable became apparent in the late 80s, when he got embroiled in a battle with the French music industry, initially about royalties. Researching the subject led him to take up the cause of Jewish composers who had had their intellectual property rights – and the accompanying earnings – stripped from them during the Nazi occupation of France. This became a controversy that eventually involved then-president Jacques Chirac, but Vangarde says an official report into the matter was "all lies – a massive cover-up": no money or rights were returned. It was another factor in his decision to retire. "I had a big fight with Sacem, the authors' rights company. To write a song and give it to this company – why would I do this?" He shrugs. "I don't do that any more."

It's easy to see where Daft Punk got their uncompromising attitude towards the music industry: when their career began to take off, it was Vangarde who suggested they make a list of everything that they didn't want to do and present it to any labels looking to sign them. "They did not want the label to be involved with the vision of the music, or the videos, or their image. This is one of the keys of their success, because when you go in the system, it has to please the A&R [people], it has to please the radio, and the music changes. Daft Punk were original, they had talent, and what they imagined went to the ear of the people with no interference."

Vangarde says he never listens to the music he made in the 70s and 80s – "I wrote 350 songs, and I couldn't sing you one of them" – and looks aghast at the thought of going back into the studio. "No, I'm very happy now. They wanted to release an album, I decided to do interviews for the first time in my life. And now," he smiles, drawing our conversation to a close, "I will quit again."

The Vaults of Zagora Records Mastermind (1971-1984) is released on 25 November via Because Music.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ZAGORA ARCHIVE

Three minutes that turn back time

A new documentary extends 200 seconds of cine-film shot in Poland in 1938 into a forensic exploration of a community obliterated by the Nazis. By **Jonathan Freedland**



Three Minutes: A Lengthening records Nasielsk's Jewish community before the Holocaust

Like anyone else, every now and again I come across old photos of family holidays. There are quite a few from the mid-1970s, mostly taken on Bournemouth beach. Obviously, I look at the faces of my parents, now gone, or of me and my sisters – but sometimes I find myself focusing on the other holidaymakers in the background, in their own deckchairs or building their own sandcastles: strangers who, by chance, were caught by our camera and preserved for ever.

There is something of that sensation at work in a mesmerising new film called Three Minutes: A Lengthening. It runs for just over an hour, and yet all the images you see come from the same three (or nearly four) minutes of home-movie footage – those 200-odd seconds of cine film played in full once at the beginning and once again at the end. In between, sequences are played backwards or forwards, sometimes slowed down, sometimes freeze-framed. Some frames are magnified so that all we see is a microscopic blur. The film was shot with barely a thought, by an American man on vacation in Europe, but this new documentary invites us to stare with rare intensity at the people who happened to find themselves in front of his lens.

We do so because of when and where it was shot. The man with the camera was a New Yorker visiting Poland in August 1938 and he took the film in Nasielsk, a small town about 30 miles north of Warsaw. The people he filmed were Nasielsk's Jews, who made up nearly half the town's population, and who, like the rest of Europe's Jews, would soon be sentenced to death by the Nazis. It means that almost every face you look at is someone who, in the following year, would be shipped out of Nasielsk and confined to a ghetto and then, three years after that, taken from the ghetto to the death camp of Treblinka, where they would be gassed.

The film very nearly disappeared. It had been shot by David Kurtz – who had been born in Nasielsk, before emigrating to the US in the late 19th century – during a grand tour of Europe, and had been left in a closet in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. It was found by Kurtz's grandson, Glenn, in 2009. He had discovered it just in time. Expert restorers said that, had he brought it to them even one month later, it would have been too late. The celluloid was shrivelling and buckling, succumbing to "vinegar syndrome". As it was, they were able to rescue it from oblivion and put it on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website; Kurtz wrote a book about the experience, published in 2014.

A Dutch film critic and historian, Bianca Stigter, chanced upon the story via a Facebook post. She watched the footage, silent and haunting. "I was immediately very fascinated by it," she says on a visit to London.

"Of course, that kind of footage is rare, but in colour it's even more rare. It makes it much more vivid And I was watching it – getting really into it – and then it was over." That's when the idea struck her: "Wouldn't it be great if we could make it last longer somehow, to keep this past in our present for a bit longer?"

It took several years – her first attempt extended the three-minute movie to about 25 minutes – but now it's ready to be seen.

Perhaps the key element is the discovery of one of the people behind those faces. A young woman in the US had found the film online and was scanning the crowd of young boys, when one struck her instantly: "It's Grandpa!"

The woman had never seen any photographs of the young Maurice Chandler but his face, even as a teenager, was unmistakable. Stigter and Kurtz would travel to Detroit to interview Chandler, one of perhaps a handful of the 3,000 Jews of pre-war Nasielsk to survive, and we hear his reminiscences, throughout the new film.

It's through Chandler that we learn of the different styles of boys' caps, those worn by the poorer lads, those that marked out students at the religious academy. We learn there was a button factory nearby, subsequently seized by the Nazis from its Jewish owners, and that a childhood prank was for kids to lop off the buttons from the adults' coats. We hear all this from Chandler but, save for a still photograph among the final credits, we don't see him. Stigter imposed a rule on herself: the only images we would see throughout the hour would be from the original footage. Stretched, slowed, magnified perhaps, but those images alone.



Bianca Stigter with her husband (and the film's producer), Steve McQueen

There is detective work: a meticulous, forensic effort to decode the name of a grocer's shop from an impossibly blurred sign or the quest to identify Nasielsk itself, deduced by from a distinctive lion engraving on the wooden door of the synagogue. The film pays a kind of sacred attention to detail, taking as read that every possible fact that can be gleaned from those three minutes truly counts.

It works in part because the horror of the Holocaust can render even the mundane – a glimpse of someone emerging from a grocer's shop – tragic and profound. Because that glimpse is of a world that has not only vanished, but that was deliberately destroyed.

That, in turn, means watching such footage can feel like an act of remembrance, even, perhaps, an act of defiance. "For me, this is a film about people and their culture that the Nazis tried to erase," says Stigter. "So having this material feels like a kind of resistance to that erasure: we have something that we shouldn't have, if they [the Nazis] had their way."

"Having this material feels like a kind of resistance to the Nazi's erasure of this culture

But given how much has been said or written about the Holocaust, is there really more to say? "It's something we probably will never get to terms with because the more you know, almost the less you understand of it."

That notion finds visual expression in the film. We hear an account of the day, in December 1939, when the Jews of Nasielsk were rounded up in the town square, organised into rows, lashed with braided whips and beaten with steel bars, the women stripped, the men shorn of their beards, before being packed into cattle cars and sent away – while local Poles, their neighbours for generations, watched and laughed. We hear those details, but what we see is an image of the cobbled square, slowly magnified and magnified until all we can make out is an indistinct blur. The more we look, the less we see. The more we know, the less we understand.

"How do we deal with this?" Stigter asks, of the enormity of the Shoah. "How do we come to terms with something like that? It's a film; you don't have to give the answers. But in a small way, I think, a little bit of the answer is in the details."

Three Minutes: A Lengthening will screen in cinemas with a recorded Q&A featuring Bianca Stigter, Steve McQueen and Helena Bonham Carter on 30 November. It is on general release and on Curzon Home Cinema from 2 December.

PHOTOGRAPH: US HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM; EPA



'I interviewed my childhood idols' … Hadley with Mel Brooks and Carl Reiner

Celebrities? They're all a bit weird

For 22 years, **Hadley Freeman** has grilled pop culture's biggest names. Here's everything you always wanted to know about A-listers (but were afraid to ask)

I started working at the Guardian in the summer of 2000 - not to write, but to look after a key. The key to the fashion cupboard, to be precise, ensuring no clothes for the fashion shoots were stolen. This was my primary role as the fashion assistant. Or, as I preferred to call myself - and say it with me as one, Ghostbusters fans - the keymaster. And I will never have a job with more responsibility or power.

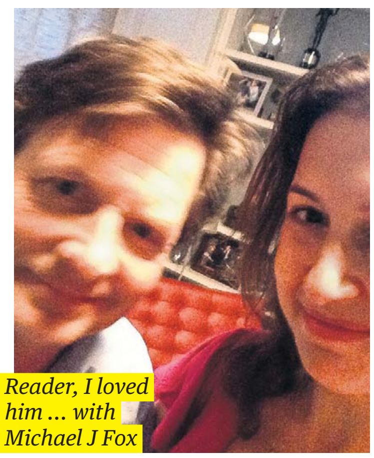
Nonetheless, soon after I started, section editors asked which celebrities I'd like to interview. I was too young and dumb to appreciate how completely incredible it was for editors to even know the name of the fashion assistant, let alone give a damn who she wanted to interview. But that's what the Guardian was like, and, my God, how lucky was I to be here. But my point in this, my last feature for the Guardian, is among all the various job titles I've had on this paper, ranging from the improbable (northern news reporter) to the frankly unbelievable (World Cup features writer), one thing that has never changed is that I always interviewed celebrities.

On some level, this is as surprising to me as being sent out to follow Wayne Rooney around Brazil in 2014, because I was never actually that interested in famous people. I never hung out at gigs as a teenager, never wrote to fanclubs asking for autographs. I'm an enthusiast, meaning I *really* like the niche little things I like (80s movies), but it never occurred to me as a kid to write, say, to John Hughes and ask him questions about his films. Why would he talk to me?

Well, the one lesson I learned at university that has stuck with me is that famous people love to talk about themselves. I wrote for my university newspaper and occasionally a famous person would come and speak to students and I was dispatched to interview them. I learned that some famous people were surprisingly delightful (Ben Affleck), some were surprisingly not (Stephen Fry, possibly having a bad day), but all were completely fine with me, a random 18-year-old, asking them really quite personal questions, because I was interviewing them.

This was a genuine epiphany. Because as well as being an enthusiast, I am nosy, and this has occasionally got me into trouble. Interviews, I quickly realised, are a context in which obnoxious nosiness is not just accepted but expected. It's where personal information is traded like a commodity for publicity, and while it still amazes me that so many celebrities will answer the bluntest of questions about their unhappy childhood/deepest trauma/ugly divorce in exchange for a mention of their movie in a newspaper, it's a transaction I am continually thrilled to exploit. It has been the rare week in the past 22 years when I haven't thought: I can't believe I get paid to do this.

But initially I had some concerns about interviewing famous people for the Guardian. I wasn't sure if my tastes would really gel with readers who bought the paper to read Polly Toynbee on social housing and Jonathan Steele on foreign affairs. A bigger problem was that I had absolutely no idea what I was doing. When I made the rookie error of turning up to interview the shoe designer Christian Louboutin in a pair of very grubby ballet pumps, he sniffily informed me that if I were a shoe, I'd be "a DM boot". Robert Downey Jr was similarly unimpressed


Reader, I loved him … with Michael J Fox

and took one look at my less-than-polished twentysomething face and expressed amazement that the Guardian had sent "the work experience girl" to interview him (it seemed unlikely that telling him that, actually, I was the fashion assistant would mollify him).

As a hardwired people pleaser, these kinds of interactions initially unnerved me. But I soon learned that they made good copy, and this helped me to slough off my childish people-pleasing ways. Often the best interviews have a bit of grit in them.

Aside from wanting to know what Marina Hyde is like (terrifying), the most common question I get from readers is what the celebrities I've interviewed are like. That's easy: they're weird. All celebrities are a bit weird, because wanting to be famous is a weird thing and living your life as the object instead of a subject is a genuinely maddening way to exist. Some celebrities are very good at being celebrities, such as George Clooney and Tom Hanks, who maintain such a commitment to their brand images (respectively, old smoothie and modern day Jimmy Stewart) that they maintain the facade even during interviews. It must be exhausting to be them - always *on* - but at least they make being famous look more fun than most.

It took me a while to let readers know how weird I am. It happened inadvertently, when the then editor of G2 sent me to the US to interview Michael J Fox about his new sitcom. Reader, I adored him. I was so overwhelmed by my lifelong fandom of Marty McFly and my now deep love for Fox himself that I let my full enthusiastic nature show in the article. I was a little trepidatious the night before the article out - would I be laughed out of the paper? Would CP Scott come back to haunt me in disgust?

To my amazement, readers seemed to like the piece, and it was at this point that I learned one of the most useful lessons of my life: I am not unique. If I like someone, chances are, others do, too. I'm pretty basic that way. From then on, I went full tilt with my enthusiasms: I interviewed pretty much all of my childhood idols - Mel Brooks, Rob Reiner, Ivan Reitman, Frank Oz - and I was delighted by how a) lovely they were and b) how many Guardian readers shared my love for them. When I was overcome by Keanu Reeves's handsomeness to the point I was barely able to ask him a question, Guardian readers gave me sympathy rather than the snark I expected. And when I giddily ran around the Academy Awards every year, begging Eddie Murphy in vain for quotes (although Kevin Hart always obliged in his mate's stead - thank you, Kevin), Guardian readers didn't roll their eyes too much. It turned out they can be interested in social issues and the Oscars, too.

As well as writing interviews, I also wrote columns, and as a

What's not to love about pondering the power of the vagina with Aerosmith?

columnist, the temptation is to be definitive about an issue, focus on the ringing black and white and not the more complicated greys. But people are rarely black and white, which is why they're so interesting. Charlie Sheen was a fascinatingly grey interviewee, someone who had done terrible things, but was smart and surprisingly self-aware and trying to figure out how to live with HIV. Woody Allen is now widely painted as A Bad Man, generally by people who have only the most skating knowledge of the 30-year-old accusations against him. I will always be grateful for the chance to interview him and later his son, Moses, and for giving me the space to re-examine the allegations. Journalism is about asking questions and refusing to accept whatever the currently accepted narrative is, whether it's about politics or celebrities. It is not about getting likes on Twitter.

There have been other changes in the world of celebrity interviews in the 22 years since I started at the Guardian. Back then, people largely laughed at celebrities when they made political statements; now they yell at them if they don't, and so they nervily plaster their Instagram pages with their thoughts about social justice. And of course, social media didn't exist back then, so journalists were the only way celebrities could talk to the public; now celebrities like Beyoncé and Harry Styles see us as irrelevant middlemen and generally bypass us entirely, which is a relief to me because people that famous rarely say anything interesting. Give me Steve Guttenberg reminiscing about Police Academy over Justin Bieber talking about his journey any day. Harvey Weinstein was once so powerful that he was able to write a column in the paper complaining about me when I wrote (accurately) that his Baftas party was boring; now, well, we all know how that story ended.

God, it's been fun. I know some journalists hate dealing with celebrities, hate covering celebrity events, and I've never understood that. If you go into journalism because you want to tell interesting, weird and very human stories, well, what's not to love about spending a day with Pete Doherty on a beach in Normandy? Or pondering the power of the vagina with Aerosmith in LA? Or chatting with Helena Bonham Carter about divorce over mugs of tea? To everyone I've interviewed, thank you for putting up with my nosiness.

But most of all, I want to thank Guardian readers for putting up with me. You tolerated my excesses, patiently corrected my errors, frequently made me laugh, and I shall miss you enormously. To use a quote from a film I've referenced on average once a week in this paper, I've had the time of my life. It's the truth. And I owe it all to you.

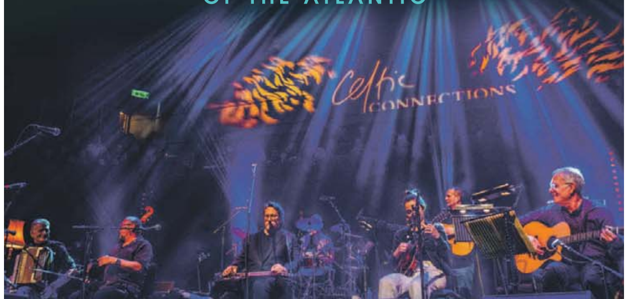


'Overcome by his handsomeness' … with Keanu Reeves

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‘Why was I rusty? White supremacy’

US singer Kelela received mass acclaim for her groundbreaking 2017 debut album, then vanished. She tells **Tshepo Mokoena** where she’s been



‘I am not seeking to be a bridge’

Kelela thought she had lost her touch. In January 2020, the US singer and producer had flown to Berlin to sketch out the outline of an album to follow her much-anticipated 2017 debut, Take Me Apart. She called up a few collaborators: LSDXOXO, real name Raus haad “RJ” Glasgow, her friend Asma “Asmara” Maroof (of Nguzunguzu). Standing in a recording booth, an instrumental playing over her headphones, she felt as though she had forgotten how to write songs.

“I remember coming out feeling so *rusty*,” she says now. Improvising over a song now called Closure, she thought: “‘You can do better than this, Kels.’” But she sang anyway, recording melodies that she would ordinarily tweak until they felt right. “I turned to Asma like: ‘Girl, I don’t know what’s going on.’ And she responded: ‘What? That was popping.’” She laughs. “I kept thinking that it was all really basic, and that I could come up with a better melody.” Rather than beat herself up about it, Kelela let the song be.

The moment speaks to the weight of expectation on Kelela (pronounced Kuh-luh-lah) Mizanekristos. This summer marked five years since she last released new music. During that time, fans of her dark, sensual electronic sound had tweeted consistently about her public silence, with reactions spanning from concern to faux panic. (“Every day I wake up, open my curtains and scream to the sky, ‘WHERE IS KELELA?!’”) It had become enough of a running joke for the Washington DC-born artist to gather some of the best one-liners for the video that teased her meditative comeback single, Washed Away, this September.

The song confirmed that her second album, Raven, was finally on its way, marking the return of one of the most groundbreaking artists of the past decade. It’s hard to overstate just how much Kelela heralded the arrival of a new, confounding sound when she released her debut mixtape, Cut 4 Me, in 2013. Then she was one of the few visible queer Black female artists straddling electronic and pop music: her feathery R&B falsetto and lyrics about love and lust mingled with icy production to evoke what you might imagine pulsing out of an underground club in a future dystopia. She ended that year with a spot on the BBC Sound of 2014 poll; three years later Take Me Apart received huge acclaim, earning her fans including Björk and Solange.

But Kelela wasn’t bothered about capitalising on those accolades, despite feeling like a late starter after breaking out aged 30. She went silent around 2018, only briefly reappearing to release an ambient mix the following year. “I really wanted to be able to stop and reconsider some things,” she says over a video call from her apartment on the Lower East Side in New York. Her close-cropped hair and brows are bleached, a look that’s now more lived-in than when she debuted it on a magazine cover in September. “To look and see if there were areas of my life where I might be able to reflect and make something feel new. I took it as an opportunity to reckon with a lot around me: my relationships, my work, my friendships.”

Even the writer’s block proved revealing. Why had she felt so rusty? “Well, white supremacy,” she says. “And capitalism.” I assume she’s half joking. “Perfectionism, I would say, is one of the central components of the culture of white supremacy,” she begins, and soon she’s on a winding path about capitalism and exploiting yourself. “There’s a way that perfectionism can distort where you’re at,” even if you have “the juice” and are already good at what you do. “This idea that: ‘I should be generating more. I should have a larger audience. I should always have more than what I currently have.’” That, she says, reminds her of how capitalism works; the constant growth and relentless productivity.

Kelela isn’t always so direct when

> **There’s a way perfectionism can distort where you’re at, even if you’re really good**

talking about Raven. From time to time she zips up and down a black Adidas track top, her long nails pale and dagger-shaped. "I would say that this record feels … maybe more explicitly boundaried?" she says. Frequently, she asks to go off the record to clarify a point, "Black femme to Black femme". When working through a knottier subject, she'll catch up to what she wants to express when she's already midway through the sentence. Granted, that may be because she's smoking what appears to be a fat joint as we talk.

She harks back to the writing process for Cut 4 Me, which she describes as purely instinctual. "I was like: 'First idea, best idea.' And you can feel that when you listen to it." Somewhere along the line, she wavered from that approach. Kelela broke out at a time when R&B was splintering. On the indie side, bands such as Dirty Projectors would get blog coverage for stiffly pairing R&B vocal hooks with guitars. Meanwhile, artists such as Banks, FKA twigs and ABRA blended melodic vocal lines with the more disconcerting corners of dance music.

Kelela became a bit of a figurehead for that group, and came to feel as though she had to extend an arm to listeners who wouldn't have expected her voice to waft over skittery, sometimes ominous production. "With my previous work, it felt very outward-looking," she says. "I was concerned with the 'reach out', worrying about how to get people invested." With this record, she says: "I'm not seeking to be a bridge."

Raven's 15 tracks ultimately came together in a week and a half. It's an expansive album that returns to some of the touchstones of Kelela's earliest work: these songs either swell slowly or jolt toward the dancefloor two-thirds of the way in.

She still sings about relationships with the intimacy of a breath on the back of your neck, though this time they're just as often about love as they are drawing firmer boundaries around her life: the title track is a kiss-off to people who weren't actively anti-racist before and during Trump's presidential term. For Kelela, Raven is an album about being an outsider who stops caring about whether she's let in, and who stops making allowances for others. Instead, she found the confidence to make a record for her core audience of queer, Black listeners.

Her new songs Raven, Holier and Bruises hint at distancing yourself from exploitative people and dynamics. They might have sounded like tracks written in response to the global uprising that swept parts of the world after the murder of George Floyd had Kelela not been talking about racism and colourism long before 2020. "I definitely didn't write these songs in response to that moment," she says. "I wrote them in response to the feeling I've always been having, that's now bubbling to the surface."

That so-called racial reckoning gave her a sort of permission to be even more upfront. "White people were like: 'OK – this is now embarrassing me. Finally, I feel embarrassed by the lack of humanity that I have been displaying to Black people, as a baseline, in my culture.'" Kelela wrote a series of letters to industry associates in an attempt to establish business on her own terms, though today she would rather not name names. Based on their responses, she shed a fair few working relationships and ended some contracts early.

In interviews about her last album, Kelela seemed worried that she wasn't openly political enough in her music.

Now, she says: "I can see that my audience really gets my politics, and where I'm coming from. They get what it means to like Kelela. Even in the crowd at a show, if you're being foul, everybody's like, 'What are you doing?' It feels like there's a culture that is fostered."

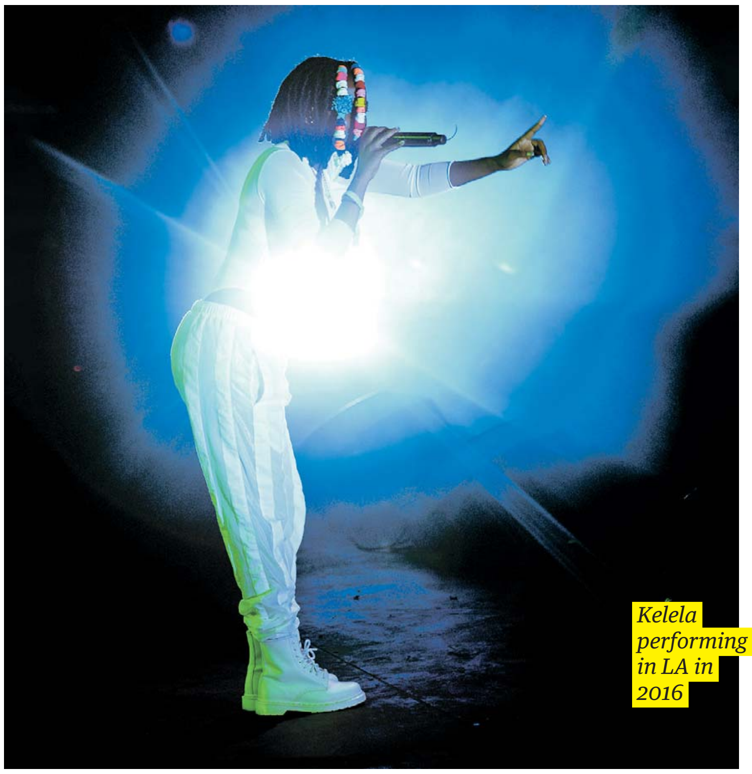
The culture-fostering is also embedded in the DNA of her new album. Whether she's referencing UK garage, 2-step or techno, Kelela uses Raven to showcase different strands of dance music as a Black artform. It's a good time for it, after Beyoncé threw down the gauntlet for listeners to recognise the music's origins with Renaissance earlier this year. How does she feel about following one of the world's biggest artists in a similar lane? "For me, it just means more niggas thinking that four-to-the-floor is for them and by them," says Kelela. "More niggas owning disco, owning certain forms of dance music. Having those popular references. It just adds value, no matter how you flip it, for me."

Looking ahead, Kelela isn't planning to fall off the grid again any time soon. She's preparing for the opposite: getting in front of crowds. Touring now feels a fairly different proposition from when she was last on the road; an expensive, logistical nightmare. "It doesn't add up for a lot of people. I'll say that," she says, talking about the economics.

More than an hour into our conversation, Kelela lights her second joint. Even when alluding to ideas, or speaking in weaving sentences that you have to untangle, she looks refreshed, excited about what comes next. I mention that she sings the words "far away" a lot on the new album. "I know," she says, smiling. "It was not on purpose." I posit that some of the songs tackle a relational and physical yearning. It's clear I'm theorising more than she is. "I'm not a conceptual artist. I don't go: 'This is the mood board for this record,'" she says. It's only when she looks back after the fact that she might realise she's inadvertently coined a motif.

Once she clocked this one, she resisted changing the lyric for variety's sake. "Maybe there's a type of isolation that both the line and the record speak to," she wonders aloud. She's still working through what that may be, even now as she promotes the album. Kelela's hiatus may be over, but she's still off in her own world.

Raven is released on 10 February 2023 on Warp.



Kelela performing in LA in 2016

PHOTOGRAPHS: MATT WINKELMEYER/GETTY; JUSTIN FRENCH CLOTHING: ACNE STUDIOS STYLIST: MARIO HORNE; MAKEUP: RAISA FLOWERS; HAIR: MATT BENNS







Peter Bradshaw's film of the week

Bones and All



Taylor Russell and Timothée Chalamet

Emo teen love story has delicious added bite

★★★★★

Dir *Luca Guadagnino*

Starring *Timothée Chalamet, Taylor Russell, Mark Rylance*

131 mins **Cert** *18*

"Take, eat, this is my body," said Jesus at the last supper, a line I recalled while reading Piers Paul Read's book about the survivors of the 1972 Andes plane crash, and again watching Luca Guadagnino's new film, adapted by screenwriter David Kajganich from the YA bestseller by Camille DeAngelis - although here there isn't quite the same transformative miracle. Bones and All is a macabre horror, an emo adventure in revulsion, a tale of young and forbidden love, and a parable for that terrible secret thought, scary but also euphoric, that enters into everyone's head in their teen years: I am different.

We are at the tail end of the Reaganite 80s. Taylor Russell plays Maren, a shy, smart kid who has just started at a new school, living on the edge of poverty with her careworn dad (André Holland). One of her new friends invites her to a sleepover, where the mood of humid, girlish intimacy excites Maren in ways the others could not have anticipated: she bites someone's finger off and eats it.

Maren is in fact a cannibal, and her addictive compulsion has kept her and her dad on the run for years. When he abandons her on her 18th birthday, Maren heads off to find her mother, to find out who she is and why she does this. Along the way, she finds there are other secret cannibals, "eaters" or "feeders". From them she learns of the ultimate cannibal experience, to eat someone completely: bones and all.

Maren is to fall in love with a wiry, fragile, beautiful runaway called Lee, played by Timothée Chalamet in his delicate style. They manage to make a life together in the straight world, yet there is a dark shadow in their carnivore romance: a creepy old eater called Sully, played by Mark Rylance, who inducts Maren into the way of the cannibal and has further gourmand designs.

Lee and Maren's cannibalism has something bizarrely innocent about it, and Guadagnino's achievement is to provoke us with this wild absurdity and yet sell it to us; to persuade us to believe they are outlaw victims of fate like Martin Sheen and Sissy Spacek in Terrence Malick's Badlands. The flesh-eating compulsion portrayed in Bones and All is not simply a YA metaphor for rebellion and marginalisation and dissenting identity politics, mischievously designed for a young audience who have probably embraced veganism. It is also about poverty and homelessness, the ruthlessness of survival and the secret shame of that special sort of hunger that stays with you even when you do survive.

Bones and All is an extravagant and outrageous movie: scary, nasty and startling in its warped romantic idealism.

Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery

★★★★☆

Dir *Rian Johnson*

Starring *Daniel Craig, Edward Norton, Janelle Monáe*

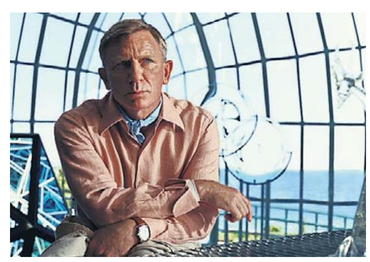
140 mins **Cert** *12A*

The first one was good … this next is better: an ingenious, headspinningly preposterous and enjoyable whodunnit romp featuring Daniel Craig as the famous detective from the deep south, Benoit Blanc, from the previous Knives Out adventure.

Writer-director Rian Johnson has established his own murder-mystery working model positioned between the Agatha Christie approach, in which the culprit is revealed at the very end, and the Columbo approach, in which it happens at the very beginning. Here, as in the first film, the guilty party's identity gradually emerges in the second half, not so much in a twist as an unfurling pirouette. But Johnson and his enigmatic, drawling sleuth keep us guessing.

Edward Norton plays an insufferable tech bro called Miles Bron, a multitrillionaire. He invites a bunch of pals to his private island for a murder-mystery-themed party. Then things turn deadly serious and of course the ashen-faced guests turn to Blanc to save them.

Glass Onion uncorks an absolute showstopper of a flashback a half-hour or so into the action, which then unspools back up to the present day giving us all manner of cheeky POV-shift reveals. Craig's outrageous leisure outfits are a joy and Janelle Monáe gives a tremendously likable comic performance. Are eccentric detectives the new superheroes?



She Said

★★★★☆

Dir *Maria Schrader*

Starring *Zoe Kazan, Carey Mulligan, Patricia Clarkson*

128 mins **Cert** *15*

The title takes the second half of the famous phrase habitually used to dismiss rape allegations as hearsay - he said, she said - and in doing so restores the importance of women's testimony. This is the story of two New York Times reporters, Megan Twohey and Jodi Kantor, and their battle to write the story about the now disgraced and imprisoned movie producer Harvey Weinstein and his decades-long practice of intimidation, harassment and rape of young female stars and junior staff, hushing them up with threats and NDA payoffs, enabled by a vast male superstructure of silence.

The women's plan was to try for a number of accusers going public at once, or, failing that, get one prominent survivor on the record and count on others coming forward - the foundation of the #MeToo strategy. Carey Mulligan plays Twohey and Zoe Kazan is Kantor, and theirs is a 21st-century workplace: as well as their stressful work, they have to deal with motherhood and exhaustion, which never worried Woodward and Bernstein. There are some great small roles: Samantha Morton is Weinstein's former assistant, and Jennifer Ehle an ex-employee. Ashley Judd plays herself.



As ever with films about newspapers, the challenge is to make the ordinary work look interesting. Often, Twohey and Kantor are shown talking to people on their mobiles while striding through Manhattan streets - as opposed to at their desks taking notes. But the film coolly conveys the awakening-from-denial horror that their investigation spread through the industry, and I admire the way it takes the macho cliched nonsense out of journalism in movies: not boozy guys being adorable and chaotic, but smart, persistent people doggedly doing their job.

Games



Somerville
Xbox, PC; Jumpship

★★★☆☆

It's a Sunday - or at least feels like one. Waking with a start, you realise you've fallen asleep in front of the TV. The dog barks impatiently for his dinner. This is how developer Jumpstart's debut begins: not with a bang but a yawn. It's an endearingly intimate glimpse of country life which, predictably, doesn't last.

As soon as you've dealt with your mutt's mealtime, an explosion rocks your countryside abode. Running outside to survey the damage, you see glowing obelisks swarming the sky, their lasers destroying farmland. It's all extremely HG Wells and as you sprint past haybales and climb over dusty Fiat 500s on abandoned A-roads, it is a very English armageddon. The regular reappearance of your loyal little terrier is a welcome sight amid the barren, death-strewn vision of the home you once knew.

Somerville tells its four-hour story through expressive animations, quiet interactions, and simple controls. From fleeing four-legged cuboids as you duck and weave through an eerily abandoned music festival, to hardening a river of plasma in order to seal off a flooding cave, its simple mechanics are used effectively. But I spent way too much time wrestling with the camera as Country Dad fumbled around near the one thing I wanted him to interact with. He walks painfully slowly, and fiddly movement is always an immersion-breaker.

The last-ditch attempt at a galaxy-brain sci-fi ending lands with a disappointing thud. But while its head-scratcher finale leaves you wishing its nonverbal narrative was a little more verbal, Somerville remains a masterclass in minimal storytelling; a series of memorable, haunting vignettes. **Tom Regan**


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JEREMY LEE · MASAKI SUGISAKI · SARAH TURNER
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HUNTER GATHER COOK · CUE POINT · SOCIAL PANTRY
SHY ONE · FÈMMME FRAÎCHE · HAUS OF FATALE
ALTERNATIVE MISS WILDERNESS · TWISTED TIME MACHINE
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THE LAKESIDE SPA WITH BATHING UNDER THE SKY · TOGETHERNESS
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Alexis Petridis's album of the week

David Bowie A Divine Symmetry



PHOTOGRAPH: THE DAVID BOWIE ARCHIVE/BRIAN WARD

Strange fascinations from maestro of ch-ch-changes

Pop

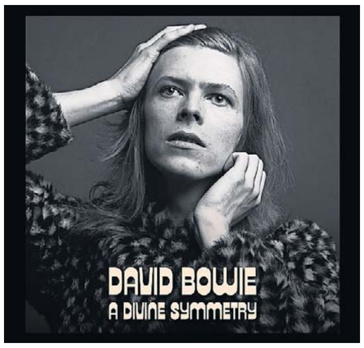
Label Parlophone, four CDs

★★★★☆

We tend to think of 1971's Hunky Dory as the moment David Bowie finally snapped into focus after years of false starts. It opens with a song often seen as his mission statement, Changes, with its promise of constant forward motion and undertaking to make pop weird again. It unveiled, on Queen Bitch, the brand of glam rock that would send his career stratospheric, and his most celebrated backing band, soon to be renamed the Spiders From Mars. It features a succession of his most indelible songs and, in its lyrics, the preoccupations that would fuel his career through the 1970s: sexuality and gender, imminent apocalypse, artifice and role-playing, mysticism and the occult. Here, at last, was the David Bowie who knew exactly what he was doing, who was no longer pretending to be a hippy, or an Anthony Newley-ish all-round entertainer; the Bowie who would so confidently cut through the coming decade that pop music and youth culture were both changed in his wake.

The truth, as revealed by Divine Symmetry - a beautifully packaged 4CD box set subtitled An Alternative Journey Through Hunky Dory - appears to have been less straightforward. The first CD of demos presents us with an artist still firing out songs in all directions, including the middle of the road. One minute he's channelling the Velvet Underground or daringly capturing the cruisey atmosphere of London's gay scene on Looking for a Friend, the next he's knocking out an oompah song intended for Tom Jones (How Lucky You Are). Songs of the depth and mystery of Quicksand rub shoulders with stuff that harks back to his eponymous 1967 debut album. The protagonist of the jaunty Right On Mother, delighted his mum likes his fiancee, would fit right in with Uncle Arthur and the Little Bombadier.

Some of the less familiar songs are more interesting for what they became than what they are. Tired of My Life is a mopey acoustic strum, nothing special until halfway through when it unexpectedly turns into It's No Game, the opening track from 1980's Scary Monsters and Super Creeps. King of the City initially sounds naggingly, maddeningly familiar. Thirty seconds in, when Bowie's voice takes on a more anguished tone, it suddenly becomes clear: it's Ashes to Ashes, almost a decade too early.



While it's fascinating that Bowie was still dipping into these songs for inspiration nine years later, the overall impression is not of a laser-focused artist who has finally worked out what he wants to achieve and how to achieve it. Divine Symmetry includes a lo-fi recording of a show at Aylesbury's Friars club in September 1971 - a gig that provoked some lurid advance publicity and subsequently gained a reputation as an epochal event. But Bowie sounds nervous, timid, eager to please. It's entertaining but offers no suggestion whatsoever that this is the artist who, within months, would be on Top of the Pops, his arm slung around Mick Ronson's neck, imperiously pointing down the camera, announcing the arrival of a new decade.

Divine Symmetry is packed out with radio sessions and alternative mixes that are sometimes intriguing and sometimes make you wonder how many versions of Bowie singing Jacques Brel's Amsterdam a person needs to hear. What emerges is a talented writer throwing ideas against the wall and shaping an album out of the ones that stuck.

There's something refreshing about that. The posthumous Bowie industry has done an impressive job of turning a complex, flawed, brilliant but mercurial artist into an unimpeachable genius who was always right about everything. It has created a fantasy world in which even the cover of Little Drummer Boy he recorded with Bing Crosby (a single Bowie hated so much, its release spurred him to leave his record label) is worth celebrating with a commemorative T-shirt. It's a wilful distortion that makes Bowie seem perfect, and thus more boring than he actually was. With all its flaws, Divine Symmetry redresses the balance.

Jazz album of the month

Artist Esbjörn Svensson

Album HOME.S.

Label ACT

★★★☆☆



When Esbjörn Svensson made his UK debut at the 1999 Swedish Jazz Extravaganza festival, the then 34-year-old pianist/composer's jubilant fusions of Thelonious Monk, Ornette Coleman, Keith Jarrett and his own playful muse showed exactly why his reputation had begun to spread beyond Sweden. The story ended tragically when he died in a scuba diving accident. HOME.S. is an uncharacteristic solo-piano meditation the artist made at home shortly before his death. Svensson's buoyancy and sweeping melodic resources are his trademark. He sometimes opens with dreamily wandering chords or treble-melody fragments but also includes frisky contrapuntal dances and stately baroque sways. The gorgeous Gamma hints at bluesy soul resolutions that only coalesce at the song's close. Flying double-time freebop erupts out of gracefully interwoven left-right lines, while quiet harmonies turn to clanging soul-jazz chords. Longtime Svensson fans will be entranced, and newcomers may catch a fascinated glimpse of a lost maestro. **John Fordham**

Rock

Artist Elder

Album Innate Passage

Label Stickman

★★★★☆



Elder began their migration from craggy, red-eyed stoner-rock to proggy nirvana with 2015's Lore. This sixth album strikes their most satisfying balance yet between ground-shaking heaviness and lofty ambition. The expansive playing of Nick DiSalvo and Mike Risberg is anchored by a sensitively virtuosic rhythm section. All five of the album's tracks share a taut focus, a restless energy. DiSalvo's harmonious vocals are a key element of Innate Passage's graceful power, though the lyrical concepts are vaporous. The epic Merged in Dreams - Ne Plus Ultra morphs from quasi-ambient synth reverie to post-rock colossus and back again, its slow-building might recalling Mastodon and Cave In. Here, Elder prove themselves those bands' equals. **Stevie Chick**

Classical

Artists Dierstein/Rothbrust/Berlin RSO/Poppe/Quatuor Diotima/Fraser/Klangforum Wien/Wiegers

Album Rebecca Saunders: Skin; Void; Unbreathed

Label NMC

★★★☆☆



Until now, NMC has never released a disc devoted to the works of Rebecca Saunders. This superb disc ought to gain the composer many admirers, for it includes one of her finest achievements: Skin for soprano and ensemble, composed in 2016 for Juliet Fraser, who is the outstanding singer here. The text is Saunders' own, though identifiable phrases emerge only fitfully, alongside passages in which voice and instruments create webs of brilliantly sculpted textures, sometimes fragile, sometimes furiously wrought. The other two works here - Void, for two percussionists and orchestra, and the string quartet Unbreathed - pay close attention to the minutest details of texture and tuning. It's all important music, superbly delivered. **Andrew Clements**



Keith Hall in The Confession

Review The Confession, Amazon Prime

A maddeningly murky murder mystery

★★★☆☆

Jack Seale



Nobody disputes that Patricia Hall left her house in Pudsey, a nice market town between Leeds and Bradford, on 27 January 1992, never to return. That's about all we know. Her husband, Keith, told police she had driven off in their car late that night, after a marital disagreement; the police strongly suspected Keith had killed her, but no trace of Pat Hall has ever been found. The case remains open, which means the two-part true-crime documentary The Confession has a bewildering, frustrating tale to tell.

Episode one chalks up the circumstantial evidence. At first, the police assume that either a body or a sign that Pat is alive will turn up, with the former, grim explanation seen as more likely - especially when a witness reports having seen an unidentifiable figure hop out of the Halls' car on the night in question, leap over a fence carrying an unidentifiable object and disappear into woodland. Then, interviews with neighbours and relatives start to paint a dark picture. Neighbours say the row between Keith and Pat was audibly vociferous, but then stopped suddenly, with the sound of the car speeding off following a little later. Pat's friend claims that, three months earlier, she had rung to say Keith had lost his temper and placed his hands around her neck, before relenting.

Keith denies this, no-comments his way through police interrogations, and stays inscrutable as days become weeks without any breakthrough. As we move into episode two, we are six months on, which the mercurial Keith deems an appropriate amount of time to wait before rejoining the dating scene. He answers a lonely hearts ad, writing to the woman that she might have seen him on the telly. By the time they meet for a drink, she has alerted the police and been replaced by "Liz", an undercover officer wearing a wire. Some weeks later, "Liz" tells Keith that her uncertainty about whether Pat might return is preventing her from committing to the relationship. Keith reassures her that this is not a problem because, he says, he strangled Pat and burned the corpse.

Anyone who has seen a decent number of whodunnits or true-crime documentaries would take a breath at this point and question whether this conversation might constitute a circumvention of the law on interviewing suspects, rendering it inadmissible as court evidence. Apparently, West Yorkshire police and the CPS had no such qualms, however, and were horrified when the judge in Hall's subsequent murder trial did indeed prevent the jury from hearing the tape, destroying the case for the prosecution. Hall was found not guilty, after which the judge allowed the recording to be made public.

Pat's family and friends were returned to an agonising limbo from which they have still not emerged, while Keith resumed life as someone widely assumed to be a murderer. But he is, to this day, a free and officially innocent man who can do whatever he pleases, including ... participating in a documentary about the case. That's right: this is one of those true-crime shows where the person we're encouraged to conclude is guilty has agreed to be interviewed. It's a ballsy move.

So what is he like? He may not now have the almost laughably creepy look seen in the show's archive stills and video - in the early 90s, Keith had the lank, sandy bowl-cut of a 70s wrestler or disgraced Top of the Pops presenter - but the present-day Keith Hall is, like Michael Peterson in The Staircase, maddeningly ambiguous. If he is guilty, his willingness to risk incriminating himself shows implausible nerve; if he's innocent, he never seems upset enough about being unfairly blamed for Pat's death. All we can do is intently study his every gesture and utterance, which makes the programme-makers' decision to film him half-lit - a gloomy room's window illuminating only the right side of his face - infuriating. When they go on to give the same treatment to one of Pat's bereft friends, we realise it's a whole vibe the show is going for: the eternal twilight of a case where the truth remains murky. But come on, we need to look at him!

There are other oddities here, such as the moments where actors in reconstructions lip-sync either to a recording made at the time, or to what appears to be interviewees now reciting what they said then, with the audio treated to make it sound like old tape. Pat Hall's disappearance doesn't need these embellishments. It's quite confounding enough.

And another thing

Catch up now with the anthology drama Little America (Apple TV+), before it comes back for season two. Its positive tales about the immigrant experience are more relevant and necessary than ever



Agatha Christie: Lucy Worsley on the Mystery Queen
9pm, BBC Two



"Agatha Christie's childhood is haunted by a sinister phantom - a gunman, an imaginary figure stalking her dreams and her home ... evil is an ever-lurking presence." Lucy Worsley certainly knows how to rope you in with a great historical tale. In this three-part series, she brings her recent biography of the enigmatic and elusive queen of crime to the screen, through dramatisation, interviews with experts and an infectious passion for the writer.
Hollie Richardson

Unreported World
7.30pm, Channel 4
For the Gaza Strip's underground artists, simply staging a play or going to the cinema can be horribly risky due to Hamas censorship. Reporter Jonathan Miller meets a man who is determined to renovate an old cinema to its former glory - even as the Palestinian enclave's cinemas are being branded "dens of pornography" and burned down.
Ali Catterall

The Great Game
9pm, Sky Atlantic
It's still early doors for this Italian drama about a disgraced football agent with scores to settle, but it has intrigue and bling to burn. Corso Manni (Francesco Montanari) may have the look of a stage hypnotist but he retains an enviable contacts book. Can he pull off a tricky favour for fickle striker Quintana (actual former footballer Jesús Mosquera Bernal)?
Graeme Virtue

The Last Leg
10pm, Channel 4
Richard Ayoade - still busy promoting that new children's book of his - joins Adam Hills, Josh Widdicombe and Alex Brooker. Also taking down the World Cup in Qatar and the other big issues of the week is comedian Susan Wokoma. **HR**

The Graham Norton Show
10.40pm, BBC One
Bond, Nanny McPhee and Magneto join Graham Norton tonight. Daniel Craig, Emma Thompson and Ian McKellen take a seat, along with Mastermind's host, Clive Myrie, and comedian John Bishop. Charlie Puth takes to the stage to perform his hit single Loser.
Sammy Gecsoyler

The Big Narstie Show
11.05pm, Channel 4
Former striker Adebayo Akinfenwa is Mo Gilligan and Big Narstie's perfect guest in this big week of football. They are joined by comedian Joel Dommett, martial artist Samurider, actor Denise Van Outen and Loose Women's Brenda Edwards. **HR**

BBC One

6.0 Breakfast (T) **9.15** MOTD Live: Fifa World Cup 2022 (T) Wales v Iran (kick-off 10am). **12.25** News (T) **12.40** Regional News and Weather (T) **12.45** MOTD Live: Fifa World Cup 2022 (T) Qatar v Senegal (kick-off 1pm). **3.15** Doctors (T) **3.45** The Bidding Room (T) (R) **4.30** The Repair Shop (T) (R) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** We Are England (T)

8.0 Death in Paradise (T) (R) DI Mooney and the team enter the high-stakes world of poker when a finalist is poisoned.
9.0 MasterChef: The Professionals (T) The last quarter-final sees the four best chefs from this week's heats come together to compete in two challenges.

10.0 News (T)
10.30 Regional News (T) Weather
10.40 The Graham Norton Show (T) With Daniel Craig, Emma Thompson and Ian McKellen.
11.30 MOTD: Fifa World Cup 2022 Highlights (T)
12.30 RuPaul's Drag Race UK (T) (R) **1.40** MOTD: Fifa World Cup Replay 2022 (T) **3.20** Weather (T) **3.25** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 Bargain Hunt 7.15 Homes Under the Hammer **8.15** Sign Zone: Trawlermen – Hunting the Catch **9.15** Animal Park Summer **10.0** The Farmers' Country Showdown **10.30** Dom Does America **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer **12.15** Bargain Hunt **12.45** Politics UK **1.30** Best House in Town **2.15** FILM Christmas in Toyland (2022) **3.40** FILM Baking All the Way (2022) **5.0** Beechgrove Repotted (R) **5.15** Flog It! **6.0** House of Games **6.30** Strictly: It Takes Two **7.0** Your Garden Made Perfect

8.0 Celebrity Antiques Road Trip (T) With Nina Hossain and Lucrezia Millarini.
9.0 Agatha Christie: Lucy Worsley on the Mystery Queen (T) New series. The historian explores the crime author's haunted, unconventional early life to discover the origins of her talent for murder.

10.0 QI (T) With Richard Osman.
10.30 Newsnight (T) Weather
11.05 Frankie Boyle's New World Order (T) (R)
11.35 Hong Kong's Fight for Freedom (T) (R)
12.35 Sign Zone Panorama (T) (R) **1.05** The Haçienda: The Club That Shook Britain (T) (R) **2.05** Louis Theroux Interviews Yungblud (T) (R)

ITV1

6.0 Good Morning Britain (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News and Weather (T) **1.55** Local News and Weather (T) **2.0** Dickinson's Real Deal (T) (R) **3.0** Fifa World Cup 2022 (T) Netherlands v Ecuador (kick-off 4pm). **6.05** Fifa World Cup 2022 (T) England v USA (kick-off 7pm).

9.15 I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here! (T) Ant and Dec present highlights from the past 24 hours in the jungle while the remaining celebrities keep their eyes on the prize.

10.20 News (T) Weather
10.55 Local News (T) Weather
11.10 The NFL Show (T) Highlights of the Thanksgiving Day round of fixtures.
12.10 Westlife Live at Wembley Stadium (T) (R) **1.10** Shop: Ideal World **3.0** Keeping Up With the Aristocrats (T) (R) **3.50** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.05** Celebrity Lingo (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.05 Countdown (T) (R) **6.45** Cheers (T) (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **9.0** Frasier (T) (R) **10.30** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **11.25** News (T) **11.30** Chateau DIY (T) (R) **12.30** Steph's Packed Lunch (T) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **4.0** Sun, Sea and Selling Houses (T) (R) **5.0** Four in a Bed (T) (R) **5.30** Come Dine With Me (T) (R) **6.0** The Simpsons (T) **6.30** Hollyoaks (T) (R) **7.0** News (T) **7.30** Unreported World (T)

8.0 The Scottish Island That Won the Lottery (T) (R) The story of North Uist in the Outer Hebrides, who's population of 1,500 collectively won £3m.
9.0 Gogglebox (T) The regular gaggle of family and friends share their thoughts on a selection of shows from the past week.

10.0 The Last Leg (T) Comic review with Adam Hills.
11.05 The Big Narstie Show (T) With Joel Dommett, Adebayo Akinfenwa, Samurider and Brenda Edwards.
11.55 I Literally Just Told You (T) (R)
12.50 Jamie's One-Pan Wonders (T) (R) **1.0** Live MMA: Professional Fighters League (T) **5.30** Drawers Off (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 Milkshake! 9.15 Jeremy Vine (T) **12.30** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) **1.20** News (T) **1.30** FILM The Christmas House (Michael Grossman, 2020) (T) **3.15** FILM The Christmas House 2: Deck Those Halls (Rich Newey, 2021) (T) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** FILM One Royal Christmas (Dustin Rikert, 2020) (T) **7.30** Susan Calman's Grand Week Out By the Sea (T)

9.0 Big Fight Live: Eubank vs Farrell (T) Harlem Eubank v Tom Farrell. All the action from the super lightweight bout at York Hall in Bethnal Green, London. Eubank, the cousin of Chris Eubank Jr, is unbeaten in his 15 professional contests. He takes on a man who has had 11 more fights but lost five.

11.05 FILM **The Football Factory** (Nick Love, 2004) (T) Drama, starring Danny Dyer.
1.0 The Live Casino Show (T) **3.0** Eggheads (T) (R) **3.50** Dogs Behaving (Very) Badly (T) (R) **4.40** The Railways That Built Britain With Chris Tarrant (T) (R) **5.30** Peppa Pig (T) (R) **5.40** Fireman Sam (T) (R) **5.50** Pip and Posy (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 Top of the Pops (T) (R) From 1993, with U2, 2 Unlimited and Culture Beat. **7.30** Top of the Pops (T) (R) Featuring Janet Jackson, Belinda Carlisle and Meat Loaf.

8.0 Top of the Pops (T) (R) A 1978 show, with Rod Stewart and Olivia Newton-John.
8.30 Top of the Pops (T) (R) From 1985, with Wham!, Whitney Houston and Prefab Sprout.
9.0 Word Up!: Black American Pop at the BBC (T) (R) A compilation of BBC performances by African-American artists of the 80s.

10.0 Whitney at the BBC (T) (R) A selection of songs from the 80s, 90s and 00s.
10.30 Queens of Soul (T) (R) Including Aretha Franklin, Roberta Flack, Gladys Knight, Randy Crawford, Mary J Blige and Beyoncé.
11.30 Lionel Richie at the BBC (R)
12.30 Country Music By Ken Burns (R) **1.20** Top of the Pops (R)

Other channels

BBC Three
7.0pm The Next Step **8.10** The Catch Up **8.15** Freeze: Back on Thin Ice **9.0** FILM Last Christmas (2019) **10.35** Starstruck **11.0** Starstruck **12.55** RuPaul's Drag Race UK **2.10** Freeze: Back on Thin Ice **2.55** Zara McDermott: Disordered Eating

Dave
6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Yianni: Supercar Customiser **8.0** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **9.0** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **10.0** Travel Man: 48 Hours in Miami **10.30** Travel Man: 48 Hours in Rome **11.0** Rick Stein's French Odyssey **11.30** Rick Stein's French Odyssey **12.0** Fast Justice **1.0** Fast Justice **2.0** Top Gear **3.0** Rick Stein Tastes the Blues **4.0** Top Gear **5.0** Top Gear **6.0** QI XL **7.0** Richard Osman's House of Games **7.40** QI **8.20** Would I Lie to You? The Unseen Bits **9.0** QI XL **10.0** Mock the Week **10.40** Mock the Week **11.20** Would I Lie to You? **12.0** Mock the Week **12.40** Alan Davies: As Yet Untitled **1.40** British As Folk **2.35** The Island **3.35** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **4.0** Teleshopping

E4
6.0am Hollyoaks **7.0** Ramsay's 24 Hours to Hell and Back **8.0** Black-ish **9.0** How I Met Your Mother **10.0** The Big Bang Theory **11.0** Young Sheldon **12.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **1.0** The Big Bang Theory **2.0** Young Sheldon **3.0** Young Sheldon **4.0** Modern Family **5.0** The Big Bang Theory **6.0** The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** The Big Bang Theory **8.0** Modern Family **9.0** Naked Attraction **10.0** Summer House **11.0** First Dates **12.05** Naked Attraction **1.10** Gogglebox **2.10** Summer House **3.0** Below Deck **3.55** Ramsay's 24 Hours to Hell and Back **4.45** Brooklyn Nine-Nine

Film4
11.0am FILM To Hell and Back (1955) Second world war biopic, starring Audie Murphy. **1.10** FILM Wake of the Red Witch (1948) Romantic seafaring adventure, starring John Wayne and Gail Russell. **3.20** FILM The Black Arrow (1948) Swashbuckling adventure, starring Louis Hayward. **4.55** FILM The Cockleshell Heroes (1955) Fact-based second world war drama, starring José Ferrer. **6.55** FILM The Nanny Diaries (2007) Comedy, starring Scarlett Johansson and Laura Linney. **9.0** FILM Hitman (2007) Action thriller, starring Timothy Olyphant and Dougray Scott. **10.50** FILM Hitman: Agent 47 (2015) Action thriller, starring Rupert Friend. **12.40** FILM Ghost in the Shell (1995) Japanese sci-fi animation, with the voice of Mimi Woods. **2.20** FILM Action Point (2018) Comedy, starring Johnny Knoxville

ITV2
6.0am Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **6.35** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **7.0** The Cabins **8.0** Love Bites **9.0** Love Bites **10.0** Dress to Impress **11.0** Dress to Impress **12.0** I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here! **1.30** In for a Penny **2.0** Supermarket Sweep **3.05** One Tree Hill **4.0** Hart of Dixie **5.0** I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here! **6.30** In for a Penny **7.0** Dress to Impress **8.0** Bob's Burgers **8.30** Bob's Burgers **9.0** FILM The Heat (2013) **11.25** Family Guy **11.55** Family Guy **12.25** American Dad! **12.50** American Dad! **1.20** Bob's Burgers **2.15** Hey Tracey! **2.55** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping

Sky Max
6.0am Stargate SG-1 **8.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **9.0** The Blacklist **10.0** Supergirl **11.0** NCIS: Los Angeles **1.0** Hawaii Five-0 **2.0** S.W.A.T **3.0** The Blacklist **4.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **5.0** Supergirl **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.10** The Ultimate Romcom Movies **9.15** Rob & Romesh vs the Three Lions **10.15** Resident Alien **11.15** Banshee **12.25** The Russell Howard Hour **1.10** The Force: North East **2.10** NCIS: New Orleans **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** Highway Patrol

Sky Arts
6.0am Fragile: A Concert for Uncertain Times **7.0** Spielberg and Williams: The Adventure Continues **7.25** FILM Abbott and Costello Meet the Mummy (1955) **8.55** Tales of the Unexpected **9.55** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **10.55** Discovering: Judi Dench **11.50** Leonardo Da Vinci: The Universal Man **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** David Hockney: Time Regained **3.0** Portrait Artist of the Year 2020 **4.0** Discovering: Al Pacino **5.0** Tales of the Unexpected **6.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.0** Berlin Live: Eric Burdon & the Animals **8.20** I Am Johnny Cash **10.10** FILM Who Killed the KLF? (2021) **11.55** Gary Numan Resurrection **1.40** Sting: Live in Berlin **3.35** Discovering: Sting **4.05** Unrestrained **4.15** Widows Might **4.30** The Byrds: Music Icons **5.0** Video Killed the Radio Star **5.30** The Night Watchmen's Nativity

Sky Atlantic
6.0am Storm City **6.50am** Storm City **7.45** Gomorrah **10.0** True Blood **12.15** Game of Thrones **1.20** The Leftovers **3.30** Gomorrah **5.0** True Blood **7.35** Game of Thrones **9.0** The Great Game **11.0** I Know This Much Is True **12.05** The Wire **3.30** In Treatment **4.0** Storm City


Ghost in the Shell, Film4

Radio

Radio 3
6.30am Breakfast **9.0** Essential Classics **12.0** Composer of the Week: Doreen Carwithen (5/5) **1.0** Lunchtime Concert. From this year's Verbier festival, tenor Michael Fabiano sings arias by Tosti, Verdi and Puccini. Plus, pianist Yefim Bronfman plays Chopin. (4/4) **2.0** Afternoon Concert. Pianist Kirill Gerstein joins the Berlin Philharmonic to play Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto. Plus, music by Mussorgsky, Liszt and Schulhoff. **4.30** The Listening Service (R) **5.0** In Tune. Sean Rafferty is joined by chamber musicians from IMS Prussia Cove. **7.0** In Tune Mixtape **7.30** In Concert. From the Ulster Hall in Belfast, Daniele Rustioni conducts the Ulster Orchestra in Bacewicz's Overture for Orchestra, Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra and Dvořák's Symphony No 9 "From the New World". **10.0** The Verb: First Drafts **10.45** The Essay: Odes to Essex. Writer Gillian Darley walks the Essex Way. (R) **11.0** Late Junction **1.0** Tearjerker With Sigrid **2.0** Downtime Symphony (R) **3.0** Through the Night

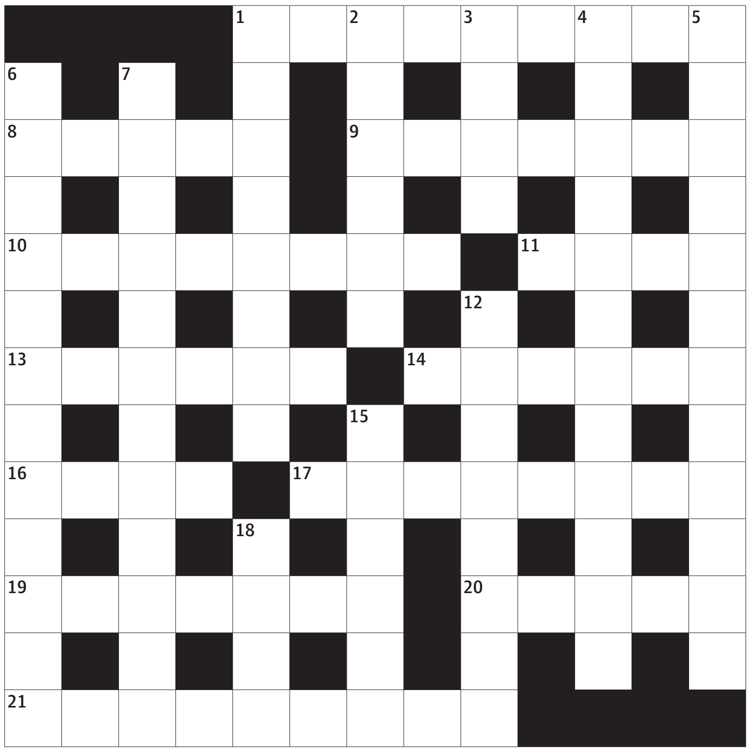
Radio 4
6.0am Today **8.31** (LW) Yesterday in Parliament **9.0** Desert Island Discs (R) **9.45** (LW) Daily Service **9.45** (FM) Book of the Week: Colditz – Prisoners of the Castle (10/10) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** Britain's Communist Thread. The ongoing influence of communism within British culture. (2/3) **11.30** Unite (R) **12.0** News **12.01** (LW) Shipping Forecast **12.04** Archive on 4: Hendrix – Everything But the Guitar (R) **1.0** The World at One **1.45** Generation Gap. A father and son discuss their turkey farm business. (5/5) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** Harland. Drama, by Lucy Catherine. (5/5) **2.45** Why Do We Do That?. Ella Al-Shamahi explores why people shake hands. (5/10) **3.0** Gardeners' Question Time **3.45** From Fact to Fiction (3/4) **4.0** Last Word **4.30** Feedback (7/11) **5.0** PM **5.54** (LW) Shipping Forecast **6.0** News **6.30** The Now Show (5/6) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Add to Playlist (8/9) **8.0** Any Questions? **8.50** A Point of View **9.0** Past Forward: A Century of Sound (1-5) **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime (R) **11.0** Americast (7/10) **11.30** Today in Parliament **12.0** News **12.30** Book of the Week (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** One to One (R)

Radio 4 Extra
6.0am High Table, Lower Orders (5/6) **6.30** Bulldog Drummond (5/6) **7.0** Romance and Adventure **7.30** Now You're Asking With Marian Keyes and Tara Flynn (8/10) **8.0** Share and Share Alike (9/9) **8.30** Married (3/6) **9.0** The Museum of Curiosity (6/6) **9.30** Bleak Expectations (2/6) **10.0** A Capital Case: Karl Marx Meets Sherlock Holmes **11.0** The Reunion Christmas Special 2013 **11.45** The New Elizabethans (43/60) **12.0** Share and Share Alike (9/9) **12.30** Married (3/6) **1.0** High Table, Lower Orders (5/6) **1.30** Bulldog Drummond (5/6) **2.0** Feel Free (5/5) **2.15** Maya Angelou: Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas (5/5) **2.30** The Mousetrap and Me **3.0** A Capital Case: Karl Marx Meets Sherlock Holmes **4.0** The Museum of Curiosity (6/6) **4.30** Bleak Expectations (2/6) **5.0** Romance and Adventure **5.30** Now You're Asking With Marian Keyes and Tara Flynn (8/10) **6.0** Psycho (3/8) **6.15** The Haunting of Hill House (3/8) **6.30** Musical Genes (3/4) **7.0** Share and Share Alike (9/9) **7.30** Married (3/6) **8.0** High Table, Lower Orders (5/6) **8.30** Bulldog Drummond (5/6) **9.0** The Reunion Christmas Special 2013 **9.45** The New Elizabethans (43/60) **10.0** Now You're Asking (8/10) **10.30** Mitch Benn's Crimes Against Music (2/4) **10.55** The Comedy Club Interview **11.0** Mark Thomas: The Manifesto (3/4) **11.30** James Acaster's Perfect Sounds **12.0** Psycho (3/8) **12.15** The Haunting of Hill House (3/8) **12.30** Musical Genes (3/4) **1.0** High Table, Lower Orders (5/6) **1.30** Bulldog Drummond (5/6) **2.0** Feel Free (5/5) **2.15** Maya Angelou … (5/5) **2.30** The Mousetrap and Me **3.0** A Capital Case … **4.0** The Museum of Curiosity (6/6) **4.30** Bleak Expectations (2/6) **5.0** Romance and Adventure **5.30** Now You're Asking (8/10)

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TODAY'S PET CORNER ANSWER **JACK**

Quick crossword no 16,397



Across
- 1 Those made (anag) - a place to live (9)
- 8 Just right (5)
- 9 Bullfighting capital of Spain (7)
- 10 Beaten by a country mile (8)
- 11 Against (4)
- 13 Native Mexican relative of the daisy (6)
- 14 Chinese system of slow meditative physical exercise (3,3)
- 16 Jerk (4)
- 17 Affability (8)
- 19 Fauna (7)
- 20 Trainee doctor (informal) (5)
- 21 Like chips? (4-5)

Down
- 1 Describing treatment of whole person (8)
- 2 Old infantry muzzle-loading gun (6)
- 3 Except for (4)
- 4 One of a series of films such as Kind Hearts and Coronets and The Lavender Hill Mob (6,6)
- 5 Reasonable care taken to avoid harm to others (3,9)
- 6 It marks another year gone (8,4)
- 7 Yahoo, say (6,6)
- 12 Got to the bottom of (8)
- 15 How to grow dwarfed trees amd shrubs in pots (6)
- 18 Little beast (4)

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Sudoku no 5867

Hard. Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9.

			4	5	3			
					1	4	6	5
	3			7				
	8		3		5			6
	5	7		2	9	3		
		2			4			1
		9						4
		5		6		7	9	

Suguru

Fill the grid so that each square in an outlined block contains a digit. A block of 2 squares contains the digits 1 and 2, a block of three squares contains the digits 1, 2 and 3, and so on. No same digit appears in neighbouring squares, not even diagonally.

5					
				3	
	3				
		1			
5					2
	4				

Wordsearch

Can you find 15 words associated with books in the grid? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight, unbroken line.

C	G	Q	U	O	T	E	T	B
T	D	R	O	W	D	X	W	V
A	Y	X	Q	I	E	R	A	N
L	S	R	T	T	I	E	U	N
E	L	I	O	P	S	T	T	C
L	O	I	L	T	E	P	H	P
N	E	O	B	M	S	A	O	A
H	T	V	E	R	D	H	R	G
T	I	H	O	N	A	C	A	E
Y	T	S	U	N	I	R	A	L
M	G	E	S	O	R	P	Y	N

Yesterday's solutions

Sudoku no 5866

1	3	9	2	5	7	4	6	8
8	6	2	1	4	9	3	5	7
5	7	4	6	8	3	9	1	2
7	1	3	9	2	4	6	8	5
2	9	8	5	6	1	7	4	3
4	5	6	3	7	8	2	9	1
6	2	7	4	1	5	8	3	9
3	8	1	7	9	6	5	2	4
9	4	5	8	3	2	1	7	6

Suguru

2	4	1	4	2	4
1	3	2	3	1	3
2	4	1	5	2	5
1	5	3	4	3	1
4	2	1	2	5	2
1	3	5	4	3	1

Wordsearch

U	I	Y	B	B	L	A	S	T
A	D	L	D	I	E	L	A	G
N	O	O	S	N	O	M	S	A
W	T	H	U	T	I	W	R	R
T	I	O	S	A	I	W	E	E
Y	C	U	R	R	E	N	T	T
P	G	A	L	N	O	E	G	S
H	N	M	L	L	A	S	P	I
O	E	C	C	M	D	D	R	W
O	R	Y	H	P	E	Z	O	T
N	C	B	R	E	E	Z	E	A

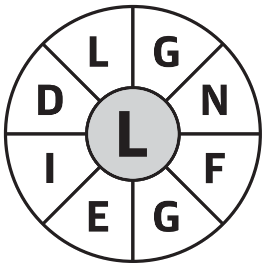
Solution no 16,396

P	U	C	K	■	S	T	R	A	I	G	H	T
O	■	A	■	T	■	U	■	D	■	R	■	H
L	A	N	G	U	O	R	■	D	R	A	M	A
O	■	A	■	R	■	K	■	T	■	N	■	W
N	Y	L	O	N	■	I	R	O	N	I	C	■
E	■	■	■	T	■	S	■	■	■	T	■	T
C	U	T	T	O	T	H	E	C	H	A	S	E
K	■	O	■	■	■	C	■	A	■	■	■	X
■	C	U	C	K	O	O	■	V	E	L	D	T
C	■	G	■	O	■	F	■	O	■	E	■	B
A	B	H	O	R	■	F	A	R	R	A	G	O
R	■	I	■	M	■	E	■	T	■	S	■	O
P	R	E	P	A	R	E	D	■	P	E	A	K

Word wheel
CLIENTELE

Word wheel

Find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each must use the central letter and at least two others. Letters may be used only once. You may not use plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. There is at least one nine-letter word to be found. TARGET: Excellent-32. Good-26. Average-19.



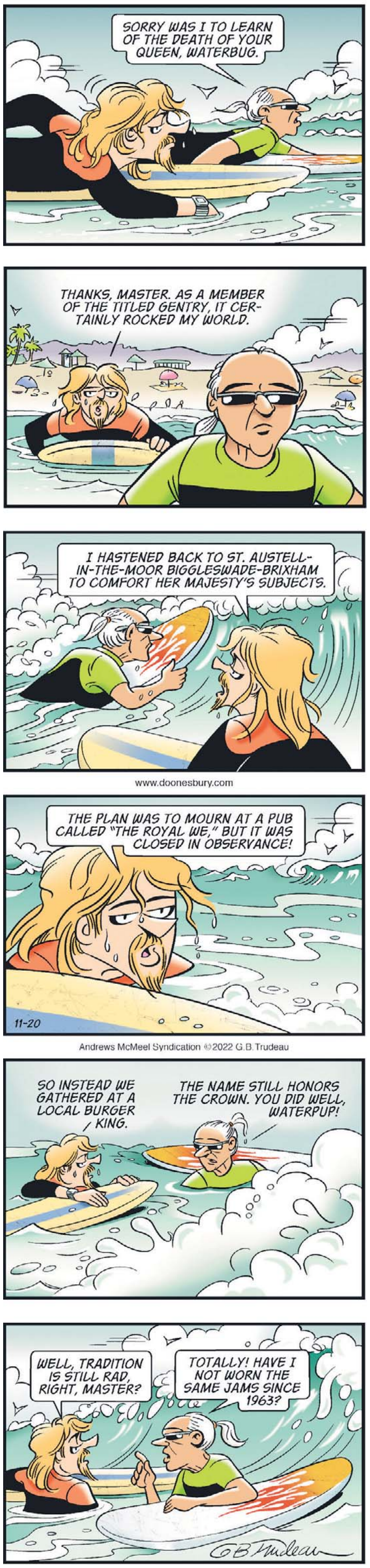
Pet corner



What was the name of Geoffrey Rush's capuchin monkey sidekick in the Pirates of the Caribbean movies?*

a. Monkey
b. Captain Flint
c. Jack
d. Davy
Answer top right

Garry Trudeau
Doonesbury



A peer accused, yet the Tories won't come clean on PPE *Angela Rayner, page 3*
Dear leaders, beware what power does to the brain *Suzanne Alleyne, page 3*
One by one, the deities of our age fall to earth *Moya Lothian-McLean, page 4*

G2 Daily pullout life & arts section *Inside*

The Guardian Friday 25 November 2022

Journal

Opinion and ideas



ILLUSTRATION: ELEANOR SHAKESPEARE

We have the technology to save the planet. Why not use it?

George Monbiot



So what do we do now? After 27 summits and no effective action, it seems that the real purpose was to keep us talking. If governments were serious about preventing climate breakdown, there would have been no Cops 2-27. The major issues would have been resolved at Cop1, as the ozone depletion crisis was at a single summit in Montreal. Nothing can now be achieved without mass protest, whose aim is to reach the critical mass that triggers a social tipping point. But, as every protester knows, this is only part of the challenge. We also need to translate demands into action, which requires political, economic, cultural and technological change. All are necessary, none are sufficient. Only together can they amount to the change we need to see.

Let's focus for a moment on technology. Specifically, what might be the most important environmental technology ever developed: precision fermentation.

Precision fermentation is a refined form of brewing, a means of multiplying microbes to create specific products. It has been used for many years to produce drugs and food additives. But now, in several labs and a few factories, scientists are developing what could be a new generation of staple foods.

The developments I find most interesting use no agricultural feedstocks. The microbes they breed feed on hydrogen or methanol - which can be made with renewable electricity - combined with water, carbon dioxide and a very small amount of fertiliser. They produce a flour that contains roughly 60% protein, a much higher concentration than any major crop can achieve (soy beans contain 37%, chickpeas, 20%). When they are bred to produce specific proteins and fats, they can create much better replacements than plant products for meat, fish, milk and eggs. And they have the potential to do two astonishing things.

The first is to shrink to a remarkable degree the footprint of food production. One paper estimates that precision fermentation using methanol needs 1,700 times less land than the most efficient agricultural means of producing protein: soy grown in the US. This suggests it might use, respectively, 138,000 and 157,000 times less land than the least efficient means: beef and lamb production. Depending on the electricity source and recycling rates, it can also enable radical reductions in water use and greenhouse gas emissions. Because the process is contained, it avoids the spillover of waste and chemicals into the wider world caused by farming.

2

We have the technology to save the planet. Why not use it?

George Monbiot

← Continued from front

If livestock production is replaced by this technology, it creates what could be the last major opportunity to prevent Earth systems collapse, namely ecological restoration on a massive scale. By rewilding the vast tracts now occupied by livestock (by far the greatest of all human land uses) or by the crops used to feed them - as well as the seas being trawled or gill-netted to destruction - and restoring forests, wetlands, savannahs, natural grasslands, mangroves, reefs and sea floors, we could both stop the sixth great extinction and draw down much of the carbon we have released into the atmosphere.

The second astonishing possibility is breaking the extreme dependency of many nations on food shipped from distant places. Nations in the Middle East, north Africa, the Horn of Africa and Central America do not possess sufficient fertile land or water to grow enough food of their own. But all the nations most vulnerable to food insecurity are rich in something else: sunlight. This is the feedstock required to sustain food production based on hydrogen and methanol.

Precision fermentation is at the top of its price curve, and has great potential for steep reductions. Farming multicellular organisms (plants and animals) is at the bottom of its price curve: it has pushed these creatures to their limits, and sometimes beyond. If production is distributed (which I believe is essential), every town could have an autonomous microbial brewery, making cheap protein-rich foods tailored to local markets. This technology could, in many nations, deliver food security more effectively than farming can.

There are four main objections. The first is "Yuck, bacteria!" Well, tough, you eat them with every meal. In fact, we deliberately introduce live ones into some of our foods, such as cheese and yoghurt. And, take a look at the intensive animal factories that produce most of the meat and eggs we eat and the slaughterhouses that serve them, both of which the new technology could make redundant.

The second objection is that these flours could be used to make ultra-processed foods. Yes, like wheat flour, they could. But they can also be used to radically reduce the processing involved in making substitutes for animal products, especially if the microbes are gene-edited to produce specific proteins.

This brings us to the third objection. There are major problems with certain genetically modified crops. But GM microbes have been used uncontroversially in precision fermentation since the 1970s to produce insulin, the rennet substitute chymosin and vitamins. There is a real and terrifying genetic contamination crisis in the food industry, but it arises from business as usual: the spread of antibiotic resistance genes from livestock slurry tanks, into the soil and thence into the food chain and the living world. GM microbes paradoxically offer our best hope of stopping genetic contamination.

The fourth objection has more weight: the potential for these new technologies to be captured by a few corporations. The risk is real and we should engage with it now, demanding a new food economy that's radically different from the existing one, in which extreme consolidation has already taken place. But this is not an argument against the technology itself, any more than the dangerous concentration in the global grain trade (90% of it in the hands of four corporations) is an argument against trading grain, without which billions would starve.

The real sticking point, I believe, is neophobia. I know people who won't own a microwave oven, as they believe it will damage their health (it doesn't), but who do own a woodburning stove, which does. We defend the old and revile the new. Much of the time, it should be the other way around.

I've given my support to a new campaign, called Reboot Food, to make the case for the new technologies that could help pull us out of our disastrous spiral. We hope to ferment a revolution.

The Guardian

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'Comment is free... but facts are sacred' CP Scott

PPE scandal

Democracy is damaged if contracts are handed to connected insiders

Crony capitalism in the House of Lords is not a good look for Britain. Yet during the Covid crisis, there appeared to be a strong case that political access allowed privileged individuals to extract a great deal of wealth from the state. On Wednesday, the Guardian produced astonishing evidence for those wishing to prosecute this argument. It suggested that Michelle Mone, a Tory peer, her husband, Douglas Barrowman, and her children secretly received £65m originating from the profits of PPE Medpro, a company that was awarded large government contracts during the pandemic after she recommended it to ministers. If capitalism during a national emergency can be so easily rigged to favour connected insiders then the country is in trouble.

The government lubricated such questionable deal-making by setting up a "VIP lane" into which suppliers recommended by politicians or officials were fast-tracked. PPE Medpro's business was referred to the VIP lane after Lady Mone contacted the ministers Michael Gove and Lord Agnew to offer help in May 2020. A few weeks later, the government contracted to pay the firm £203m for protective equipment for the NHS. A court later said that the VIP lane was unlawful. Perhaps worse, it was ineffective. The government is now in dispute over millions of surgical gowns supplied by PPE Medpro that it says were not up to scratch. PPE Medpro insists its products passed inspections.

Lady Mone was appointed as a lifetime peer by David Cameron in 2015. Her arrival on the Tory benches raised eyebrows, given her previous support for Labour. Others questioned her business credentials, given her lingerie business had lost money (it went under in 2018). But the Tory peer was undeterred, selling jewellery on a home shopping channel and promoting herself as a cryptocurrency expert. Lady Mone's conspicuous success has been hard to miss recently, with a lavish lifestyle of luxury yachting, an expanding property portfolio, a honeymoon in the Indian Ocean and a wedding featured in Hello! magazine. The peer, however, denies becoming fantastically rich by profiting from a company she lobbied to be awarded state contracts.

Lady Mone is being investigated by the Lords commissioner for standards after being accused of failing to declare an interest in PPE Medpro. The firm is also being pursued by HM Revenue and Customs, apparently for unpaid taxes. It says that it will "pay in full" if any outstanding monies are owed. The Mone family properties have been raided by the National Crime Agency, which is investigating potential fraud relating to the company. The National Audit Office thought that £1.4bn of spending through the VIP lane is "at risk" of not achieving value for money.

The whole episode reeks of a contempt for government. Peerages should not be just a means to personal - or ideological - ends. Neither should they be doled out to wealthy business people in return for bankrolling political parties. The Lords has become imprudently bloated, now with over 800 peers. Leaks suggest that Sir Keir Starmer will abolish the upper house and replace it with a new elected chamber as part of plans to "restore trust in politics". Many peers perform a valuable role by calmly scrutinising and amending legislation that has often been rushed through the Commons. However, the revelations about Lady Mone show just how much strain the upper house and British state institutions have been put under by the current political dispensation. Moral corruption at the heart of the British parliament is a morbid symptom for liberal democracy itself.

Education

The pandemic stole months of children's schooling. The losses must be made good

Children in England should have learned to read by age seven. Given an age-appropriate book, they are expected to be able to focus on understanding - who the story is about, what is happening - rather than expend effort on sounding out individual words. Literacy, numeracy and social and physical skills are the blocks on which all learning is built. So it is concerning that the latest research on the pandemic's effects shows that the number of very low attainers in reading, in the third year of schooling, has more than tripled.

In a sample of 6,000 pupils from 81 schools, the proportion who fell below expected levels rose from 2.6% to 9.1% between 2017 and this year. There was also a marked decline in maths, with very low attainers increasing from 2.6% to 5.5% of the total. While there were some signs of a recovery in the 12 months to spring 2022 - a period when schools remained open, with catchup schemes in place - the head of the Education Endowment Foundation, Prof Becky Francis, says that inequality exacerbated by the pandemic is now the "biggest challenge" facing schools overall.

In retrospect, Boris Johnson's refusal to fund the post-pandemic package recommended by the expert hired for the purpose in 2021, Sir Kevan Collins, looks even more shortsighted and mean-minded than it did at the time. Mr Johnson offered less than 10% of the £15bn that Sir Kevan said was needed. How much better for the government to have invested in the future then, by putting in place a comprehensive recovery package.

Instead, schools were left high and dry, lacking the resources to make up for lost learning and to support the children most troubled by the disruption. Even the national tutoring programme was botched first time round, with the contract given to a private company that could not deliver. Other research, including from Ofsted, has shown that very young children were among the worst affected by the pandemic, with increased social and emotional difficulties and delays. Unsurprisingly, evidence points to the most serious consequences being suffered by those who already had least - and who spent lockdowns in overcrowded housing, with adults who were less able to support them.

Against this backdrop, the increase in school funding promised this month by the chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, offered some relief. An additional £2.3bn a year for two years is expected to bring funding back to roughly where it was in 2010 - and means teachers' pay rises will no longer have to be funded via cuts. But the decision to plug the gap in schools' budgets while ignoring nurseries and further education colleges is unforgivable. Years of rhetoric from successive ministers about skills, and new vocational routes as alternatives to university, have been exposed as hot air.

Educational divides are stark. Even before the pandemic, efforts at closing the gap between children from wealthy and poor households had stalled. The early years sector will need investment if this is to change. So will provision for pupils with special needs. The pupil premium should also increase, to give schools with the most deprived intakes additional resources. More must be done to recruit, retain and motivate teachers. The damage wrought by Covid-19 is obvious. But the Conservatives do not have a good story to tell seven-year-olds, or anyone else, about what has happened to schools in England throughout their years in office.

A peer accused, yet the Tories still won't come clean on PPE

Angela Rayner



The new Guardian revelations about Michelle Mone – claims that she and her children secretly received £29m originating from the profits of a PPE business that was awarded large government contracts after she recommended it to ministers – go way beyond startling headlines. They also clearly highlight the conflicts of interest and failures of due diligence that lay behind the waste of billions of pounds of taxpayers' money, and a Tory "VIP lane" that was declared illegal by the high court earlier this year.

We learn that PPE Medpro was given £203m to supply face masks and sterile surgical gowns at the height of the pandemic. Lady Mone, a Tory peer, referred PPE Medpro to the Cabinet Office in May 2020, five days before it was even registered as a company. She contacted the then ministers Michael Gove and fellow Conservative peer Lord Agnew, offering to supply PPE – for a price. Lord Agnew referred PPE Medpro to the "VIP lane", fast-tracking the bid for public contracts.

It now appears that tens of millions of pounds from those contracts ended up in offshore accounts connected to the individuals involved.

The government has admitted holding records and correspondence relating to the award, including any declarations of interest and due diligence. But it has refused to publish it, saying that it is in mediation with the company, so commercial confidentiality applies. This is an excuse it has been making for 10 months now.



Michelle Mone in the House of Lords PHOTOGRAPH: WPA/GETTY

It's the opposite of transparency. Yesterday in the House of Commons I called on ministers to commit to their release, both to the UK Covid-19 public inquiry and to parliament. They gave no such commitment.

Asked what progress had been made in mediation, they would say only that it had not yet reached a satisfactory conclusion. That is certainly one way of putting it. We know that 25m surgical gowns, for which the government paid PPE Medpro £122m of our money, were subsequently rejected after inspection. They were never even used.

Ministers have failed to explain that abject failure, and would not say yesterday whether a penny of public funds had been recovered. Gove, back in the cabinet, claimed Mone's referral had been passed to an "independently" run channel but was unable to say what due diligence was being performed.

There are, rightly, separate questions for Mone to answer about her previous denials of involvement in PPE Medpro and her apparent failure to declare it. When asked about this omission, her lawyer replied: "Baroness Mone did not declare any interest as she did not benefit financially and was not connected to PPE Medpro in any capacity."

The Guardian's latest revelations cast doubt on this claim, raising serious questions about this apparent conflict of interest and what the government knew at the time.

What the government has not denied is that a Conservative politician apparently benefited personally and financially from her connection to a business that was awarded substantial government contracts as a result of her lobbying by a backdoor route not available to others.

But it's not just about one case: this goes far wider.

More than £9bn has been written off by this government on PPE that was procured with public money and then deemed unfit for use – unusable, overpriced or undelivered. These were the gloves, goggles and gowns that were needed on the frontline in the NHS and care when nurses were left wearing bin bags instead.

As families struggle to make ends meet, taxpayers are still paying £770,000 every day on the storage of PPE that is unfit for use. That's enough to put more than 36,000 children into part-time nursery care. It represents billions wasted through downright incompetence and sleaze.

It took a successful Labour motion to force this government to release records over the Randox scandal, which led to the exposure of now disgraced former Tory MP Owen Paterson, who broke parliamentary rules to lobby for that firm. He now says the investigation into his conduct breached his right to privacy, and was unfair. It's a total mess. But it's certainly also time the government committed to releasing all the records relating to PPE Medpro.

Worse still, shameless ministers appear to have learned nothing from these scandals. The government's new procurement bill gives them free rein to hand out billions of pounds of taxpayers' cash once more. Far from showing that they will take steps to prevent a repeat of this scandal, they've brazenly admitted that if a new pandemic were unleashed upon us tomorrow, they would do it all again. But we can no longer afford another of these scandals – or waste on this epic scale.

Labour will put an end to this culture of cronyism and waste with a new plan for procurement and an Office for Value for Money to ensure public money is spent with care – and it's Labour that has a plan to clean up politics by restoring standards in public life through an Independent Ethics and Integrity Commission.

Britain is sick of being ripped off by the Tories. It's time to turn their procurement racket on its head.

✱
Angela Rayner *is the MP for Ashton-under-Lyne and Labour deputy leader*

✱
Suzanne Alleyne *is a founder at Alleyne&, and fellow of the thinktank Demos*

Dear leaders, beware what power does to the brain

Suzanne Alleyne



The thing that people with power don't know is what it's like to have little or no power. I am often in rooms with people who do not understand this – people who are so accustomed to having power that they don't even know it's there. I am a black woman in my 50s, neurodiverse, with multiple mental health diagnoses. Part of my job involves working with leaders in the arts, business and politics, supporting them to see the one thing they can't: the effects of the power that they wield.

I call this research the neurology of power. It involves looking at the sociological explanations of power as well as the neuroscientific underpinnings. Researching these ideas brought me into conversations with leading scientists. Prof Lisa Feldman Barrett, at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts general hospital, told me about a process known as "body budgeting", or allostasis. She argues that, like a financial budget, our brains keep track of when we spend resources (eg going for a run) and when resources are deposited (eg eating). It is a predictive process, by which the brain maintains energy regulation by anticipating the body's needs and preparing to satisfy those needs before they arise.

Feldman Barrett says this process extends to our emotional needs, which has social effects. For instance, our ability to empathise with another person is dependent on our body budgeting. When people are more familiar, our brain can more efficiently predict what their inner state may be. This process is harder for those less familiar to us, so our brains may be less inclined to use up precious resources in making difficult predictions.

Sukhvinder Obhi, of McMaster University in Canada, told me more about the empathy struggles of people with power. Because the brain makes predictions based on past experiences, these patterns are self-reinforcing. Often, powerful people learn to behave as if they have power. Powerless people learn to behave as if they have none.

This research legitimised what I knew. Power wires the powerful for power; but it can also wire them against people without power. You can lose your empathy. And power is critical for wellbeing.

This empathy deficit has historically been a celebrated attribute among leaders – ruthlessness that allows people to make hard decisions. You can see it in political leaders of every persuasion, and today it feels particularly stark.

We need a new kind of policymaking, that starts by listening, by sharing power with the people who understand the nature of powerlessness. We can't stay in this perpetual loop of those with power deciding everything. Power is a limiting factor for our leaders, who would also benefit from a reset. We can do things differently. Let's try.



One by one, the deities of our age fall to earth

Moya Lothian-McLean



The new gods are running into a bit of trouble. From the soap opera playing out at Twitter HQ, the too-big-to-fail bankruptcies in the cryptocurrency space, to mass tech layoffs, the past month has seen successive headlines declaring a litany of woes facing the bullish tech boyos in Silicon Valley and beyond.

The minute-by-minute coverage of Elon Musk's escapades and the global levels of interest in the FTX collapse both go well beyond what you'd expect from a business story. I'm willing to gamble a few Bitcoins that the popular fixation has little to do with any particular interest in successful software engineering; rather it is the personalities who inhabit these spaces. What is their end goal, we wonder. What drives them, beyond the pursuit of growth? It is easy to assume that money is all that motivates the likes of Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos and Musk. Except, when you start to examine the mindsets of these men, it's clear that cash is far from the whole story.

The concept of "effective altruism" has had its day in court after FTX, the world's second largest cryptocurrency exchange announced that, oops, it was mysteriously short of $8bn and would be filing for bankruptcy. FTX's millennial chief executive, Sam Bankman-Fried, was driven into crypto by an adherence to the effective altruism movement. Originally espousing giving as much targeted time and money to philanthropy as possible, EA has been changed by its most prominent practitioners into getting very, very rich and then spending that money on projects that better the human race. This "earn-to-give" philosophy is dependent on data-driven analysis of what causes offer the best returns of "betterment". It's utilitarianism with a god complex.

Then there was the allegation last week by the Insider journalist Julia Black that Musk, along with other billionaires, appear to be engaged in their own personal eugenics programme via a movement called "pronatalism". Black writes that pronatalism - an ideology centred on having children to reverse falling birthrates in European countries, and prevent a predicted population collapse - is "taking hold in wealthy tech and venture-capitalist circles", with the aid of hi-tech genetic screening.

Musk has championed pronatalist ideas publicly. Privately the Tesla founder is, in his own words, "doing my part"; he has 10 children known to the public, two of whom are twins he fathered with an AI expert who serves as an executive for his Neuralink company. But the ideas go beyond Musk and into the canyons of Silicon Valley: the world's richest and most powerful people see it as their duty, Black claims, to "replicate themselves as many times as possible".

Black's subjects also namecheck effective altruism, longtermism (which prioritises the distant future over the concerns of today) and transhumanism (the evolution of humanity beyond current limitations via tech) as complementary philosophies. The concept of legacy is key to understanding our tech pioneers. As one interviewee tells Black, "The person of this subculture really sees the pathway to immortality as being through having children." Given that Musk's "genius" business record is one of multiple near-bankruptcies before he even arrived at Twitter, this rather undermines the theory that the future will be safe only if populated with mini-Musks.

These companies believe that in order to make ideas a reality, they require total control of the landscape around them. The pursuit of growth is a means to an end. The underlying raison d'etre tying these various tech titans together - which often sees them work in tandem, rather than competition - is their fervour for enacting their own personal theological outlooks in supposed service of the wider world. To do this, they must dominate and monopolise - remake society in their image, platform by integrated platform.

When we view these monoliths as businesses like any other, or allow them to claim global monopolies, we fail to realise that they are competing for more than our attention or our cash: they are competing for the right to dictate what our societies look like. So it matters a great deal when that vision falters, or fails altogether. It's the stuff of myth and folktale played out via forums and Wall Street Journal tip lines; the emperors slowly shedding their clothes. We are watching would-be gods shrink back to being men.

*
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Letters

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Established 1906

Country diary

Northam Burrows, Devon

Three curlews flush up from the path in front of me. I catch a flash of white, mottled brown, curved bills, but keep on walking. They often wait for the tide to retreat on this patch of coastal grassland close to the mudflats they like to feed on. The mud is submerged now, water stretched over like a second skin.

Another group rises from the ground behind the brambles: four, five, six. Then another, and another, until there are 20 in the air. I keep walking. Like the curlews, I am watching the tide. I am not waiting for its retreat but rather to catch it at its tipping point, when the water becomes safe enough to swim in but still rough enough that I can catch the force of the waves and feel, for a moment, swept up.

A whoosh of wing stops me as another group takes flight. At first, it seems like clouds of curlews lifting and soaring together, but then the starlings start to differentiate themselves – smaller, darker bodies among white bellies and long bills. Starlings glitter through the curlews' light feathers. Curlews glide through the starlings' tremors.

Next, it is the sound that separates them. The long creak of the curlew's cry is like a bow being drawn over a string – a cello, perhaps, out here on the rough grassland – cutting through the starlings' chatter, until it feels like the bow no longer moves over strings but starlings, as the sound turns to a prolonged trembling that matches their sway. I stand still inside the music. I forget the tide. I forget the waves. I do not need water to be carried away.

Curlews are facing such large declines in breeding populations and ranges in the UK that this gathering, though comparatively small, feels like an abundance. As I stand, enveloped by the throng, I ask: what did I do to deserve the curlews? It is a question that hangs in the air for a moment, caught among the pulsing bodies before one final surge carries it away.

Elizabeth-Jane Burnett



ILLUSTRATION: CLIFFORD HARPER

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Let's reverse the mad experiment of Brexit

Rishi Sunak may have to placate his party (Sunak quells Tory unrest over talk of revised EU deal, 22 November), but we the people don't. We were never asked to vote on a hard Brexit; the consequences were just not explained. Did the Brexiters consider the labour shortages and economic consequences, or the effects on Northern Ireland? It seems unlikely. Even now, when we are suffering from the financial catastrophe caused by Brexit and the financially illiterate extreme-right ideologues, we have not been told exactly what the "great opportunities" of Brexit are and when they will materialise.

What the country needs is a rational dialogue on which measures would work best – a Swiss-style or bespoke agreement – and consideration of the suggestion by the CBI chief, Tony Danker, to relax immigration rules for much-needed labour and skills.
Marisol de Lafuente Duff
London

● In the middle of the last century, some writers on religion included the communism of the Soviet Union and its vassal states when referring to quasi-religious cults. Simon Jenkins rightly applies the phrase to Brexiter fanatics (There's no 'Swiss deal', but the UK does need to be closer to Europe, 22 November). Such cults have often teetered on the edge of magic, and the belief in Brexit dividends does indeed come close to believing in fairies. As long as this cult is represented in the House of Commons and its members receive the Conservative whip, it is inevitable that our rulers will fiddle with Tory party management while the country burns.
Geoff Reid
Bradford

● Simon Jenkins avers that "politicians of all parties clap their hands over their ears and scream, 'Brexit is over. Forget it'." Wrong. The SNP doesn't, and it is the third largest party in the UK parliament.
Helen Swann
Glasgow

● Could we stop talking about a Swiss-style solution please? The Swiss are far from resolving their relationship with the EU. The protracted framework negotiations to replace the hundreds of separate agreements previously in place broke down last year.

Since then, Switzerland has been downgraded to a "non-associated third country" in the EU's Horizon Europe framework programme for research, resulting in it losing its influence. The country has lost many other access privileges too. There is no easy solution to be found here.
Beatrice Türler
Wilmslow, Cheshire

● Zoe Williams' piece on the anti-Brexit mood taking hold in the country was nicely optimistic (Most Britons regret Brexit. No 10 has yet to catch up, 22 November). But still the petition to parliament to rejoin the EU is only at a miserable 14,167 as I write this. Where are these people who want rejoin the EU? My guess is that they're simply not aware that there's a petition. Could the Guardian highlight this with a campaign perhaps?

Where are the thousands who marched in October? Where are the Liberal Democrats? They must have more than 14,167 members alone. Where are the young, the city dwellers, anybody and everybody who wants us to finish this mad Brexit experiment? This petition should be in the millions, shouldn't it? C'mon, let's do this thing, let's reverse it.
Nye Gibbons
St-Martial-sur-Né, France

Sensitivity on DNR decisions is vital

The Paralympian Helene Raynsford has shone a light on the distress caused when DNR (do not resuscitate) decisions and conversations are not done appropriately (Paralympian says she was asked to sign 'do not resuscitate' form, 23 November). This is symptomatic of longstanding issues with communication around DNRs, which were exacerbated during the pandemic. To base these decisions on assumptions about someone's disability or age is not only unacceptable, it is also unlawful. Doing so can have a catastrophic impact on people's trust in the healthcare system, and can result in them being denied appropriate life-saving treatment.

Making assumptions based on disability or age also undermines the essential role that DNR decisions play in end-of-life care. When made and communicated properly, these decisions protect patients from invasive and often futile treatment that can do more harm than good. They can also open up important conversations about someone's wishes for end of life.

It is a decision that many people want to make proactively – the proportion of calls that Compassion in Dying received on this issue more than doubled in 2020, with the vast majority seeking support to refuse CPR and other life-sustaining treatments should they become seriously ill.

As Helene has said, individuals must be in the driving seat of their care. DNR conversations must always involve the individual or those close to them, and be based on their circumstances and wishes. Helene's experience should act as a warning that there is much more work to be done to ensure that this is a reality for everyone.
Usha Grieve
Director of partnerships and services, Compassion in Dying

Therapy to get rid of a working-class accent

Jamie Fahey's article (I had to fight my way through class barriers into my job. Why has so little changed?, theguardian.com, 23 November) brought back painful memories for this working-class, immigrant-heritage woman who went on to gain an MSc from LSE and an MLitt from Oxford.

It wasn't until I was a special educational needs coordinator in a school that I reflected on being sent to speech and language therapy as an adolescent. I did not have speech delay or any known affliction. What I had was a working-class accent, and my selective secondary school presumably wanted to help me succeed. So, while friends practised tennis, I learned to speak "properly". I still wonder which was time better spent.
Clair Battaglino
London

When Burnley was the UK's cultural capital

Amid the drama surrounding English National Opera's mooted move to Manchester (Mancunians are not heathens, Burnham tells opera company, 24 November), it is perhaps appropriate to remind all concerned that such a relocation is not without precedent.

For two years in the 1940s, the Old Vic and Sadler's Wells ballet and opera companies (later to become ENO) relocated from a Blitz-torn London to take refuge in Burnley's Victoria theatre.

From their northern redoubt, they organised four tours at a time – two drama, one opera and one ballet, performing to enthusiastic audiences across the north-west.
Austen Lynch
Garstang, Lancashire

Corrections and clarifications

● An opinion article was wrong to say that the UK supreme court ruled in 2016 that joint enterprise cases were "racially biased". While the judgment found that the law had been wrongly interpreted for 30 years, it was the New York Times that reported that defence lawyers and others had argued that these cases were unfair and racially biased (Our 'joint enterprise' convictions are shaming us, 15 November, G2, p3).

Editorial complaints and corrections can be sent to guardian.readers@theguardian.com or The readers' editor, **Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU.** You can also leave a voicemail on **020 3353 4736**

Is phone addiction causing accidents?

Could the rise in car accidents involving pedestrians (The long read, 22 November) be explained in part by the rise in mobile phone usage? As a cyclist, I frequently use shared paths, and I am amazed by how many people walk around glued to their phones, unaware of what is happening around them.
Mike McMorran
Bournemouth, Dorset

● Martin Kettle refers to Scotland's "often brutal social media culture" (Journal, 24 November). As opposed to England's prevailingly gentle social media culture, would that be? Jings, that "headstrong and reckless" Scottish cyberworld sounds awfy scary – thank goodness it stops at the border.
Nancy Graham
Belfast

● Michael Parrish wants £500,000 per head for a place in his nuclear bunker (G2, 24 November). Can he please tell us where he is going to keep this money, and why he thinks it will be worth more than, say, cowrie shells or simple barter when he emerges as king of Essex after 10 to 20 years?
Michael Robinson
Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire

● Your article about the late "Sir Alfred", who spent nearly 20 years at Charles de Gaulle airport (G2, 23 November), reminded me that the original Guardian article about him (which I still have) inspired me to send him a pair of socks. I wonder if he ever received them?
Shirley Hetherington
Great Ayton, North Yorkshire

● Surely if you have to explain their meanings, the contenders for "word of the year" should be ruled out of the running (Oxford word of the year to be put to the public vote for the first time, 22 November).
Derek Schofield
Wistaston, Cheshire



Rab Noakes

Singer, songwriter, guitarist and founding member of the Scottish band Stealers Wheel

Noakes playing at the Bring It All Home - Gerry Rafferty Remembered tribute concert at the Celtic Connections festival in Glasgow, 2012 ROSS GILMORE/ REDFERNS

On stage, Rab Noakes was an immaculately dressed singer and guitarist who might play almost anything. There could be Scottish traditional songs, American ballads, or songs by his heroes Bob Dylan and the Everly Brothers, through to tracks by Cliff Richard and Talking Heads.

And along with these "interpretations" (he hated the word covers), there were his own songs, which showed his gift for melody, his love of Americana and his ability to write about a wide variety of subjects, ranging from tributes to other musicians, such as his friend Gerry Rafferty, to the defiant That Won't Stop Me, written after cancer treatment.

Rab, who has died suddenly aged 75, played a unique role in the Scottish music scene, thanks to his encyclopedic musical knowledge. He started playing and writing in the 1960s, working with Rafferty, with whom he founded Stealers Wheel (though he left before the band signed a contract and made hit records). His songs were also recorded by another popular band, Lindisfarne, with whom he toured.

He recorded a series of solo albums for big record labels, but never notched up the expected hits. However, he kept going at an age when many musicians might think of retiring, and his later work was as powerful as anything in his early career. Rab loved to collaborate. He toured with the Scottish Gaelic singer Kathleen MacInnes, and with the American singer-songwriter Brooks Williams, with whom he had recently finished recording an album of Don Everly songs.

With the singer Barbara Dickson, an old friend, he recorded Reunited in 2014 and last toured in September. She described him as "a great life force … a fantastic songwriter and wonderful guitarist. People would watch from the front row with binoculars to see what he was doing". He also built up a following among young Scottish musicians, several of whom were due to play on his next album.

Living in Glasgow, Rab inevitably became involved with Celtic Connections, the festival featuring Scottish music and other global styles. Its creative producer Donald Shaw booked Rab to perform at the festival, and he played a key role in tribute shows to Rafferty, the singer-songwriter Michael Marra and Martyn Bennett, who had mixed Scottish folk with electronica.

"He was important for making the connection between old Scots and new Americana music," said Shaw. "Scotland has found its own voice by looking outwards rather than inwards in the last 40 years … he helped to bridge that gap."

Rab was born in St Andrews, Fife, the son of Robert Noakes, a postal worker, and Elsie (nee Ogilvie), a local government officer and amateur singer. The family moved to Cupar, where Rab attended Castle Hill primary and then Bell Baxter high school, where he first met Davie Craig and Artie Trezise, friends with whom he would go on to make music.

On leaving school at 16 he joined the civil service, working as a pensions and national insurance clerk, first in Alloa, then Glasgow and London. But he was also making a name busking and playing the folk club circuit. He made his first professional appearance in Glasgow in 1967, and in 1969 spent "nine weeks, seven days a week, four hours a night" playing in a hotel in Denmark with Craig.

> **His work showed his gift for melody, his love of Americana and his ability to write about a wide range of subjects**

In the same year he met Rafferty, in Billy Connolly's father's house in Glasgow. They remained close friends and in 1971 he played on Rafferty's solo album Can I Have My Money Back?, before deciding not to remain with him in Stealers Wheel (although he still sometimes played live with them). By now he had met Lindisfarne, who recorded his Turn a Deaf Ear on their 1970 debut Nicely Out of Tune, and Together Forever on their bestselling Fog on the Tyne in 1971.

Rab was now following his own path. He joined Dickson, Craig and Trezise, and other musicians from across the region, in the Great Fife Road Show, which toured Scotland in 1970, and in the same year he released his first album, Do You See the Lights? A second solo album, Rab Noakes, was released in 1972, produced by Bob Johnston, who had worked with Dylan, while Red Pump Special (1973) was produced in Nashville by Elliot Mazer, known for his work with Neil Young.

Its songs included Branch, which he sang on the BBC TV show The Old Grey Whistle Test, but it failed to produce any hits. Later albums included Never Too Late (1975) and Restless (1978), produced by Terry Melcher, famed for his work with the Byrds, and which included backing vocals by Rafferty and Dickson.

Once known as a heavy drinker, Rab gave up alcohol in 1982. With his pop career apparently stalled, he moved to the BBC, where he made use of his vast musical knowledge and love of radio, working in Manchester and then Glasgow, as a senior music producer. He quit in 1995 to start a production company, Neon, with Stephy Pordage, whom he married in 1998. This was followed by a label, Neon Records, and his career blossomed as he became a maverick independent.

His recent releases included I'm Walkin' Here (2015), The Treatment Tapes (his 2016 answer to Dylan's Basement Tapes, following a cancer operation) and Welcome to Anniversaryville (2018).

An active member of the Musicians' Union, he served on its executive committee for 16 years until he stood down in 2020. As a performer who loved meeting other musicians and music fans in the media, he was one of the current organisers of the London lunches that he christened "the SCRIBs": Songwriters, Composers, Rockers, Inky-fingered maniacs (writers & publicists) and Broadcasters. He often sang, and was always the best-dressed man in the room.

Stephy died last year. His first marriage, to Marianne Mitchelson, ended in divorce. Rab is survived by his brothers, Alan and Ken.

Robin Denselow

Rab (Robert Ogilvie) Noakes, musician, songwriter and producer, born 13 May 1947; died 11 November 2022

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Donald Perkins

Particle physicist whose career ranged from cosmic ray studies to the discovery of the Higgs boson

The particle physicist Donald Perkins, who has died aged 97, made vital discoveries about the structure of the proton, and nuclear interactions at extreme energies, and first proposed the use of beams of pion particles in cancer therapy.

His career spanned the birth of particle physics, as it emerged from studies of cosmic rays in the 1940s, through its maturation in the final decades of the last century, to the climactic discovery of the Higgs boson in the 21st. He played key roles throughout.

When Perkins began research in 1948, the electron, proton and neutron were the only known fundamental particles whose role in building atoms was understood. The pion, a particle predicted to carry the strong force that binds atomic nuclei, had recently been discovered in cosmic rays by Cecil Powell of Bristol University, and it was in Powell's group that Perkins began his research career.

Powell had pioneered the use of photographic emulsions to study cosmic rays. The technique involved going to high altitudes, such as the Pic du Midi, or using specially adapted weather balloons, to get best access to the rays. Perkins' supervisor was GP Thomson, who had been active in the second world war, and Perkins asked him to arrange for a flight from RAF Benson in Oxfordshire to take his photographic emulsion up 30,000ft and fly it around for several hours.

During the next few years Perkins managed to obtain several significant images of pions in action. He was the first to observe the nuclear capture of the negatively charged pion and obtained evidence that the pion is unstable. With Powell and Peter Fowler, Perkins published an encyclopedia of emulsion images of the interactions of cosmic rays, The Study of Elementary Particles by the Photographic Method (1959), which was state of the art in the field. In 1961, Perkins and Fowler first suggested the use of pion beams as a cancer therapy.

Discoveries in cosmic rays inspired the birth of high-energy particle physics using terrestrial accelerators, which led to the discovery of a veritable zoo of particles. That most of these are not fundamental was suspected, but not until 1968 was there direct evidence that the proton, and by implication others, are composed of more fundamental particles.

The breakthrough had come from experiments at Stanford, California, where electrons were used to probe inside the proton and neutron. That the fundamental constituents are quarks, however, was only established in 1972, thanks to an insight by Perkins. Among the avalanche of particle discoveries had been that of the neutrino, in 1956. This electrically neutral sibling of the electron fascinated him.



Perkins, right, and Norman Barford sinking a pipe into the Aletsch glacier on the Jungfraujoch in the Bernese Alps in 1948, to test whether ice can be used to detect particles

After becoming in 1965 professor of elementary particle physics at Oxford University, where he built the modern department of nuclear physics with Denys Wilkinson and Ken Allen, Perkins began to use beams of neutrinos, at the Cern laboratory in Geneva, as probes of the proton. There he was directly involved in two breakthrough discoveries that inspired the modern standard model of particles and forces.

Perkins was well informed about the Stanford experiments with electrons and immediately, in 1968, convinced a newly formed collaborative team using Cern's Gargamelle bubble chamber that beams of neutrinos could provide a complementary view of the proton's inner structure.

This idea dominated the neutrino programme at Cern, and by 1972 their data enabled the electric charges of those constituents to be measured. The result: the proton and neutron are built of quarks, bound together by gluons. By 1973 this had inspired development of the modern quantum chromodynamics theory of the interacting particles, a key foundation of the standard model.

The strong nuclear force was understood, but the weak force, whose most familiar role is in fuelling the sun and in causing forms of radioactivity, remained an enigma. A novel theory, uniting the weak force with the electromagnetic force, now received its first confirmation thanks to Perkins and the Gargamelle group.

Neutrinos are a unique probe of the weak force. They were known to pick up electric charge when interacting with protons, but the emerging theory uniting electromagnetic and weak interactions required the existence of a previously unseen consequence of the weak force in which neutrinos bounce off protons unchanged.

The Gargamelle experiment played a leading role in establishing the existence of these "neutral currents", which paved the way for eventual confirmation of the unified theory and Nobel prizes in 1979 for its theoretical creators, Sheldon Glashow, Abdus Salam and Steven Weinberg. At the time of their award, the agents of unification, the massive W and Z bosons, were not yet discovered. The Gargamelle results, much driven by Perkins, were deemed sufficient proof by the Nobel committee.

Perkins was a member of Cern's scientific policy committee from 1981 to 1986, and latterly its chair, a period when LEP, the Large Electron-Positron Collider and precursor to the current Large Hadron Collider, was being built. With the standard model established, the long march to find its fulcrum, the Higgs boson, began. Perkins' graduate textbook, Introduction to High Energy Physics, first published in 1972, is now in its fourth edition and continues to educate and inspire new generations of particle physicists working at the Large Hadron Collider.

> **In 1961, Perkins and his colleague Peter Fowler suggested the use of pion beams as a cancer therapy**

Born in Hull, east Yorkshire, Donald was the son of Gertrude and George Perkins, teachers of, respectively, English and maths. Educated at the city's Malet Lambert high school, he went on to Imperial College London, where he gained a BSc in physics in 1945 and his doctorate in 1948.

He was a senior scholar of the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 for three years, before becoming an associate in physics in 1951 at the University of Bristol. After a year at the Lawrence radiation laboratory, at Berkeley in California, he returned to Bristol in 1956 as a lecturer in physics, appointed a reader in 1960. He was at Oxford University, where he was a fellow of St Catherine's College, from 1965 until his retirement in 1993.

Having been elected fellow of the Royal Society in 1966, he won the society's Royal Medal in 1997. He was appointed CBE in 1991.

Perkins married Dorothy Maloney in 1955. She died in 2021, and he is survived by their two daughters, Venetia and Michele.

Frank Close

Donald Hill Perkins, particle physicist, born 15 October 1925; died 30 October 2022

Birthdays

Stuart Andrew, Conservative MP and sports minister, 51; **Paul Copley**, actor, 78; **Dominic Cummings**, political strategist, 51; **Blythe Duff**, actor, 60; **Thea Gilmore**, singer and songwriter, 43; **Philippa Harrison**, publisher and literary agent, 80; **Squadron Leader George "Johnny" Johnson**, the last surviving British Dambuster, 101; **Yvonne Kenny**, operatic soprano, 72; **Lord (Paul) Murphy of Torfaen**, former Labour MP and minister, 74; **Lyn Parker**, former chef de cabinet to the president of the international criminal court and former diplomat, 70; **Steve Rothery**, guitarist, 63; **Donald Sassoon**, emeritus professor of comparative European history, Queen Mary University of London, 76; **Selaine Saxby**, Conservative MP, 52; **Dougray Scott**, actor, 57; **Gerald Seymour**, thriller writer, 81; **John Taylor**, inventor and entrepreneur, 86; **Bruno Tonioli**, choreographer, dance show judge and broadcaster, 67; **Sir Peter Wright**, director laureate, Birmingham Royal Ballet, 96; **The Rev Prof Frances Young**, theologian and Methodist minister, 83.

Puzzles

Yesterday's solutions

Killer sudoku
Easy

7	2	3	5	8	1	4	9	6
5	9	8	7	4	6	1	2	3
6	4	1	3	2	9	7	5	8
9	7	2	6	1	8	3	4	5
1	8	5	4	3	7	2	6	9
3	6	4	2	9	5	8	1	7
4	1	7	9	5	3	6	8	2
2	3	9	8	6	4	5	7	1
8	5	6	1	7	2	9	3	4

Medium

8	1	5	6	7	4	9	3	2
3	6	7	2	1	9	5	8	4
4	2	9	8	5	3	1	6	7
1	5	4	9	8	7	6	2	3
7	9	6	3	2	1	8	4	5
2	8	3	5	4	6	7	1	9
9	7	1	4	3	8	2	5	6
5	4	8	7	6	2	3	9	1
6	3	2	1	9	5	4	7	8

Codeword

T	I	M	I	D		I	N	D	I	C	T	
H		A		R		N		U		O		T
U	N	C	R	O	S	S		B	I	R	T	H
M		A		N		E		S		G		R
B	E	Q	U	E	A	T	H		M	I	N	I
		U		D			O		O			V
B	E	E	F		B	R	O	C	C	O	L	I
U			A		A		P		H			N
R	E	S	T	Y	L	E	S		A	G	O	G
S			A		S			D		R		
T	A	L	L		A	F	F	I	X	I	N	G
I		I		A		A		V		Z		A
N	U	M	B	S		W	H	E	E	Z	E	S
G		B		K		N		R		L		P
	J	O	U	S	T	S		T	R	E	K	S

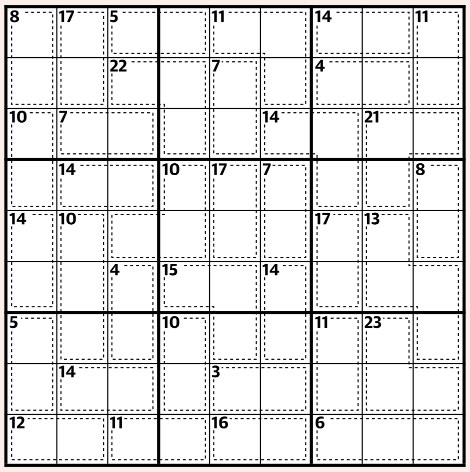
Cryptic crossword
Solution No. 28,923

L		M		P		S		S		W		S		J
O	N	A	N	I	S	T	I	C		O	V	O	L	O
V		T		E		A		O		M		D		I
E	X	A	C	T	O	R		R	W	A	N	D	A	N
C		H		A		T		E		N		E		T
O	R	A	L		Q	U	E	S	T	I	O	N	E	R
N		R		I		R				S				E
Q	U	I	D	S	I	N		T	O	E	R	A	G	S
U				L				I		R		R		O
E	S	T	R	A	N	G	I	N	G		T	O	O	L
R		O		N		E		S		S		M		U
S	T	A	N	D	I	N		E	N	C	H	A	N	T
A		M		H		E		L		O		T		I
L	L	A	N	O		V	A	L	E	N	T	I	N	O
L		N		P		A		Y		E		C		N

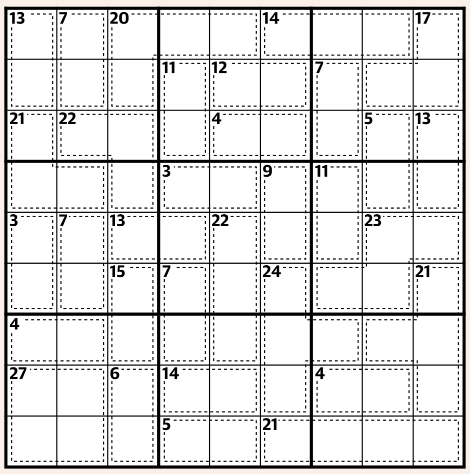
Killer sudoku

Easy

The normal rules of Sudoku apply: fill each row, column and 3x3 box with all the numbers from 1 to 9. In addition, the digits in each inner shape (marked by dots) must add up to the number in the top corner of that box. No digit can be repeated within an inner shape.

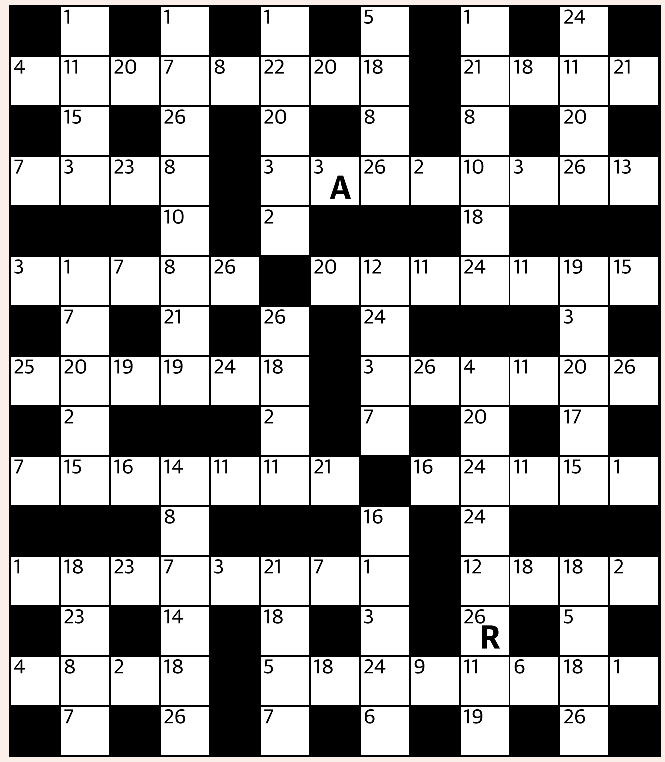


Medium



Codeword

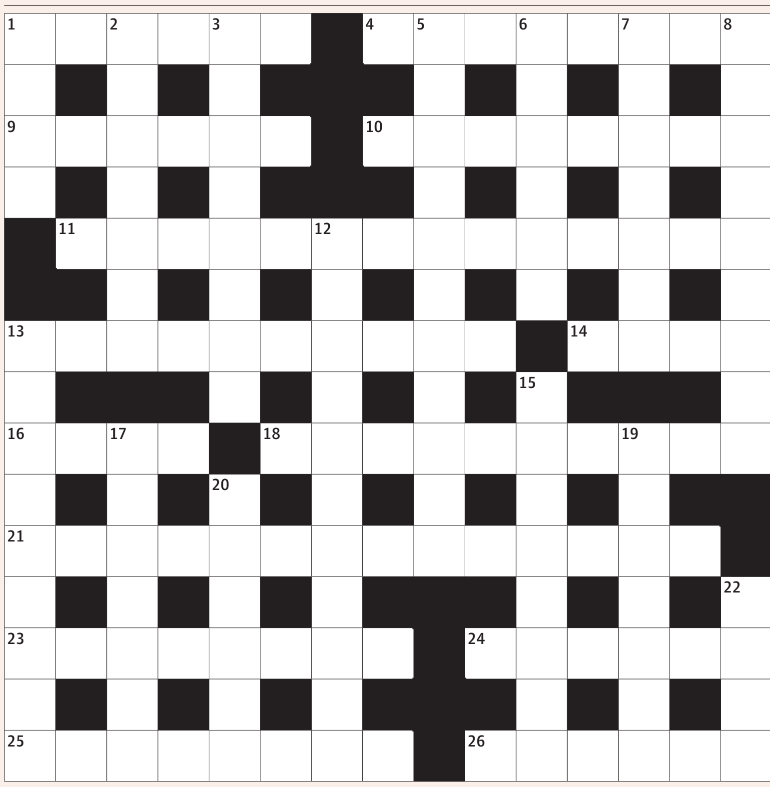
Each letter of the alphabet makes at least one appearance in the grid, and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. The letters decoded should help you to identify other letters and words in the grid.



~~A~~ B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q ~~R~~ S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3 A	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26 R

Guardian cryptic crossword No 28,924 set by Philistine



Across

1 Perfect stories (4,2)
4 As a feather in bed is spoilt (8)
9 African natives in oversize brassieres (6)
10 One suffering endless torpor (8)
11 Food Napoleon and his entourage kept warm (4,2,8)
13 Conservative lists shed tears in preparation for a fresh start (5,5)
14,16 Cheese turnover? Yes, a new recipe for beginners (4,4)
18 Try tender exotic trees, but they won't grow here (4,6)
21 They advise where to find pots and pans (7,7)
23 Song in a code to do with buzzers (8)
24 Repeated words of claimant, rambling (6)
25 Top dog, say I, for close observation (5,3)
26 Gave compensation in return, a requirement for American 12s (6)

Down

1,22 Before delta strain Covid ends, snoring interrupts vaccination of players (4,4)
2 Beneath tree that's heavenly (7)
3 Penchant for the final act (4,4)
5 Riley's life in Florence? (2,5,4)
6 Cut energy usage, said at first by them (6)
7 There's a mother! (7)
8 He'd test us about protective cover (4,5)
12 Recent arrival in November disrupted Brown Abbey (7,4)
13 You've lost control, pal (9)
15 Intervene to protect Charlie's treat (8)
17 What am I doing for the environment? (7)
19 Choose to back Mary, at heart a complex woman (7)
20 Top up fee (6)
22 See 1

Stuck? For help call **0906 200 83 83**. Calls cost £1.10 per minute, plus your phone company's access charge. Service supplied by ATS. Call **0330 333 6946** for customer service (charged at standard rate). **Want more?** Get access to more than 4,000 puzzles at **theguardian.com/crossword**. To buy puzzle books, visit **guardianbookshop.com** or call **0330 333 6846**. *